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The Role of Heads of Department in Achieving Quality: A Case Study of a High-Ranking University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
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Declaration

The work in this thesis was developed and conducted by the author and I declare that, apart from work whose authors are explicitly acknowledged, this thesis represents original work undertaken solely by the author. I confirm that it has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Parts of this study have been presented on several occasions, including:

1. *Inaugural Postgraduate Student Conference*, (April 2013), University of Warwick, UK.
2. *Stories*, Graduate Conference (March 2014), University of Oxford, UK.
3. *Kaleidoscope, Opening up the Ivory Tower*, Graduate Student Research Conference (May 2014), University of Cambridge, UK.
4. *British Educational Leadership Management and Administration (BELMAS)*, Annual Conference, (July 2015), University of Reading, UK.
5. *Converging Concepts in Global Higher Education Research: Local, National and International Perspectives*, Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE), Annual Research Conference (December 2015), Cardiff, UK.

Abstract

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is governed by an absolute monarchy, with a relatively short history of Higher Education (HE). However, the need for high quality and strong educational leadership within its academic institutions is just as pressing as elsewhere. Despite a growing number of studies on the performance of Heads of Department (HoDs), there is relatively little research investigating their role in Quality Assurance (QA), and virtually none within the KSA context. The present research is grounded in 'leadership' and 'HE quality' literature. A case study approach was adopted to investigate HoD perceptions of their roles in QA at a leading Saudi university. Data were collected through 59 online questionnaires administered to the HoD participants as well as through interviews with 36 selected HoDs, a former university rector and various staff members with QA responsibilities. The data collection is probably unique in so far as the female researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with 26 male academics, despite the strict gender segregation normally observed in KSA.

The study found that most HoDs acknowledged their QA role and that their beliefs and actions in this regard were influenced by their disciplinary affiliation and length in post. Identified challenges in quality achievement included limited resources, a lack of financial and administrative autonomy, heavy workload and bureaucracy and resistance from senior colleagues. Participants also identified several ways that the work of the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment, a key body in the quality achievement context within KSA, might be improved. HoDs claim they are heavily involved in QA but other staff are critical of their contribution. The new system for appointing HoDs is seen as enhancing departmental quality because the Selection Committee increases faculty involvement and reduces patronage. The two-year term of office is deemed too short for QA purposes. Although professional development opportunities are available, HoDs say they do not have time for them.

Based on these findings, a theoretical model linking different QA approaches (compliance, consistency and culture) to different outcomes (achieving accreditation, maintaining standards, and change and improvement) has been developed. The study also makes practical recommendations about Saudi HoD recruitment, professional development and institutional support of value to policymakers in KSA higher education.

Glossary

BERA	the British Educational Research Association
CoHE	the Council of Higher Education
CQU	College Quality Unit
DDQ	Deanship for Development and Quality
DDQMs	Quality and Development Deanship Members
DQC	Departmental Quality Committee
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ESG	The European Standards and Guidelines
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council grant
EUA	The European University Association
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher education institutions
HoD	Head of Department
HQC	Heads of Quality Committees
HQU	Heads of Quality Units
ILO	Intended Learning Outcomes
ISO	International Standards Organisation
KASP	King Abdullah Scholarship Programme
KAUST	King Abdullah University for Science and Technology
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
KSA	the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
KSU	King Saud University
MoHE	the Ministry of Higher Education
NCAAA	National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment
NQF	the National Qualifications Framework
OIA	the Office of the Independent Adjudicator
PG	Postgraduate
QA	Quality Assurance

QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
QDMs	Quality and Development Deanship Members
QMS	Quality Management system
SCHE	the Supreme Council of Higher Education
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SSR	Self-Study Report
TNA	Training Needs Analysis
TQM	Total Quality Management
UG	Undergraduate
UK	United Kingdom

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the background to the study, also presenting the rationale for the research, outlining the research questions framing the inquiry and explicating the organisation of the thesis chapters. Quality in Higher Education (HE) is assumed by some to be inherent, in view of its traditional role of preparing the intellectual leaders of the future. In the past, graduates from such establishments became leaders and influenced others while much of their success has been attributed to the education they have received from their “alma mater”. However, under the impetus of societal democratisation, universities have progressed from being the preserve of the elite and well-connected to being centres of learning accessible to all. Further, universities are now expected to provide an educational experience that not only transforms learners intellectually but also provides them with the knowledge and skills to work in a variety of fields and disciplines. In view of the shift in roles, there is a more critical focus on the educational experience universities provide, for the performance of these institutions is shaped by the expectations of a variety of stakeholders including politicians, parents and students.

Historically, a number of narratives regarding the evolution of the role of universities prevailed. In turn, universities have been positioned as learning communities dedicated to the development of their members, providers of professional expertise and identity, developers and evaluators of new knowledge and as contributors to the development of their society (Watson, Hollister, Stroud and Babcock, 2011). In propinquity to these ideas views of the roles of universities have developed, ranging from intellectual transformation to moral education. The notion that universities exist to educate and develop individuals intellectually is a long-held ideal. The argument advanced by Cardinal Newman (2009) at the beginning of the 20th century promoted

the idea that the purpose of universities was to expand the mind by allowing students to pursue knowledge and search for truths, which exercise was considered to be an end in itself (Anderson, 2009). Graduates were seen as morally upstanding figures in society, who were respected for their learning; even today many religious institutions still see this as their focal purpose as in the case of Islamic and Christian universities, which promote ethical values (Sengendo, 2016). However, it has also been shown that the moral behaviour of students attending such universities is likely to have been shaped by their upbringing rather than by the university (Castro, 2007).

The above discussion invites examination of the primary purpose of HE in the modern world. It was the Dearing report (1997) that introduced the idea that universities should be preparing students to contribute to society by benefitting the economy, which was to say that universities should enhance the employability of students. This catalysed the belief that the primary objective of universities was to prepare students for employment (Crebert et al., 2004), thereby replacing the notion of HE as a social institution with the idea of universities comprising, in part, a service industry (Sotirakou, 2004; Juhl and Christensen, 2008). In line with this, universities are now also regarded as commercial enterprises, wherein there is a focus on productivity. Apart from being large employers in their own right, universities generate much revenue for local businesses through both students and visitors (Veugelers and Del Rey, 2014). Furthermore, their research activities contribute additional funds for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Thus, HE objectives are now more complex and go beyond the aim of simply educating students. Many of those working in the sector disagree with this change in what HE is expected to accomplish. There is consequently some conflict between those academics, who regard their job as educating students and broadening their minds, and those in managerial positions, who are expected to run their departments as a business (Bok, 2009).

This chapter introduces the issues surrounding leadership in HE and explains the context of the study. As this study has focused on the role of Heads of Department (HoDs) in HE in Saudi Arabia, the following discussion describes the hierarchal structure of universities there, as well as the ways in which Saudi Arabia is encouraging a knowledge-based economy by promoting more interest in HE. Given the concomitant need for Saudi universities to be recognised internationally, a sharper focus on quality within the academic institutions in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has emerged. The chapter explains the rationale for this study within the context of Saudi Arabia, and then presents the research questions which shaped this study. It then provides a brief summary of the chapters in this thesis.

The next section looks at leadership in HE as an attempt to contextualise the focus of the study.

1.2 Leadership in HE

Leadership plays an important role in organisational performance (Ogawa and Bossert, 2000), and this holds equally true for universities. Yukl (2002) defines leadership as a social process, whereby an individual or a group intentionally exerts influence over other individuals in order to organise team activities for the purposes of work. This indicates that leadership is a sociological concept and learned behaviour, as leaders work and flourish in groups. New leaders may not have the right preparation for the job when appointed, but ultimately they may be able to enhance their skills and knowledge by showing awareness of the needs of others. Often leadership and management are conflated and understood to be similar in nature and focus. However, leadership stands in contrast to the concept of management, since the main focus of an individual in a managerial position is the organisation of day-to-day activities (Milburn, 2010), thereby reducing his/her role to operational control and planning (Middlehurst and Elton, 1992). By contrast, a leader is someone who has a vision and can think both critically and strategically (Bolden, 2005). Hence, leaders have followers while managers and administrators supervise subordinates (Zaleznik, 1977). Moreover, leaders develop new initiatives, inspire their team and

set directions, whereas managers implement the objectives devised by others (Kotter, 2008; Teckchandani and Schultz, 2014).

These explanations of leadership suggest that it is more challenging to perform a leadership role than a managerial or administrative one, as leadership is concerned with the ability to implement change, while management is responsible for dealing with the complexities arising from that implementation (Kotter, 1990). Of course, this is a simplistic division as the activities of leaders and managers often overlap. Clearly, while attempting to influence others in the achievement of a certain goal, managers may actually be performing leadership roles as well. By the same token, leaders at times carry out management activities through contributions to planning and the organisation of tasks (Teckchandani and Schultz, 2014).

Having established the key differences between leadership and management, the discussion now progresses to a review of how leadership development has changed over time (Bolden, 2005). In the early 20th century, it was more about the 'Trait' approach, which focused on the innate qualities of the person involved, wherein it was believed that leaders are born, not trained (Brungardt, 1996), hence implying that there was little room left for improvement and development. Subsequently, it was rightly noted that although natural predispositions and experience important for leadership development, the literature on leadership began to highlight the significance of specialised education and training courses developing leaders, with a particular focus on skills and abilities (such as interpersonal communication, problem-solving, decision-making and having a vision). In essence, this view conceptualised leadership development as learned behaviour, which was thus teachable.

In the mid 20th century, the "style or behavioural model" of leadership came to the fore, with a focus on how leaders approached the task and how they behaved in particular situations. This kind of approach was more about a situational or contingency leadership style. Between the late 1970s and the early 2000s, the emphasis shifted to a "transformational" leadership, wherein

leaders evidenced the ability to transform their followers to achieve their desired goals. Transformational leadership was viewed as the most effective style within the educational sector (Muijs et al., 2006), which signified that leaders had to have qualities to attain the completion of goals by their followers, through the use of collegial relationships. However, leaders and followers may not have shared the same vision, which in the current environment is seen as problematic, especially since, as noted by Smith and Hughey (2006), leadership in HE is complicated by changing social, economic and political conditions. Therefore, the model of distributed leadership became more prominent within HE due to the shared responsibility for leadership, which in limiting the power of strong individuals is seen as more valuable (Muijs et al., 2006). However, Bolden et al. (2009) have suggested that there is little evidence in favour of distributed leadership in HE. There is the likelihood that distributed leadership may not always work seamlessly in HE, wherein there may already be a conflict between academics and management, based on their perceptions of the role of HE in the modern world. Further, it is difficult to ensure that academics will have the right skill-set to be leaders or managers. In the context of the KSA, there is a greater focus on management-led approaches in HEIs, due to a number of factors. These include a centralised system of education and limited leadership and vision in the Saudi HE system, which is characterised by an over-supply of managers. Since the top-down approach to management seems to dominate in Saudi universities (Darandari et al., 2009; Al-Eisa and Smith, 2013) and Saudi Arabia is a hierarchical society with high power distance (Hofstede, 1980, 1994, 2001), issues of power in leadership and management play a key role in Saudi HE. Therefore, these may strongly influence achievement of quality.

1.3 Higher Education in Saudi Arabia

Education is the crux and building block of any society, but within the KSA the structure of the education system was quite chaotic until the 1930s, when it became formalised, although at first it focused simply on the study of Islam. Frequently, Saudi Arabia is described as a very conservative country with a rigid religious code and gender division (Taleb, 2010; Alebaikan, 2010; Elyas and Picard, 2013). However, an alternative perspective has recently emerged in literature, which claims that within KSA there is a mixture of tradition and modern technology and also a mix of normative approaches and modern lifestyle (Hamdan, 2005; Maddux, Martin, Sinaceur and Kitayama, 2011; Coleman, 2012a; Kronick, 2014). The country is also changing in terms of education, and despite continued gender segregation it seems to be shifting to the development of a knowledge economy (Reisberg, 2011).

The first Saudi university to be incepted was the King Saud University (KSU), which was established in 1957 in the capital city of Riyadh. By 2015, the number of universities in KSA had increased to 26 state universities, 10 private universities and 41 private colleges. The number of universities may be related to the current levels of population (approximately 32 million), of whom 60% are below the age of 25. This means that there is a need to develop new universities and to reform the education system to facilitate the development of the students enrolled within it. This can help to modernise the outlook of KSA (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013). In support of this idea, since 2005 the Saudi Government has invested heavily in its HE. In 2017 alone the funding approximated to \$55.4 billion in the form of developmental funds for the HE sector (Ministry of Finance, 2017). This fund covers HE initiatives, including the introduction of new state HEIs and expanding current ones, leading to more students being enrolled, and funding bursaries for programmes abroad. In general, the system of education in the KSA has four unique features: a centralised system of control and educational support; a focus on Islamic

teaching materials; comprehensive government funding (education is free at all levels), and a strict policy of gender segregation (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013).

A key stakeholder in this process of modernisation is the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), which was established in 1975. Currently, stepping beyond its remit of supervising universities, scholarships and international relations, the MoHE is endeavouring to aid institutional development and educational reform. Adopting a centralised managerial approach, it has the support of numerous centres such as the National Centre for Assessment in Higher Education “*Qiyas*”¹, which supervises university entry tests and attempts to facilitate equality in the HE system. There is also the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA), which is the key authority overseeing quality standards implementation in HEIs (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013). One of the instruments at its disposal is a long-term strategy called “*Afaq*”², which seeks to transform the HE sector and the economy from an oil-dependent one to an economy focused on a broader resource and manufacturing base.

In recent years, there have been several major changes experienced by Saudi HE. One of these has been the establishment of a university that is completely independent of the MoHE and the other relates to reforms to the ways in which the country’s oldest university (KSU) is governed, so that its international ranking can be increased. The first of the changes was achieved by the opening of foreign-modelled and co-educational King Abdullah University for Science and Technology (KAUST) in 2009. Unsurprisingly, in a gender-segregated society, this caused heated social and political debate (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013). Additionally, curriculum changes have led to the teaching of internationally recognised subjects and Saudi nationals have been granted scholarships to study abroad under various programmes (Elyas and Picard, 2013).

¹ In the Arabic language, *Qiyas* means measurement.

² In the Arabic language, *Afaq* means horizons.

The King Abdullah Scholarship Programme (KASP), which was introduced in 2005, has provided stipends and funding to over 120,000 Saudi HE students, granting them the opportunity to study abroad (Hilal and Denman, 2013). This achievement continues to impact societal expectations and to be influenced by them (Bukhari and Denman, 2013). It is important to note that KSA is trying to establish a community network of learners and scholars, who are productive and educated. Saudi learners who travel abroad tend to go to the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, Egypt and Jordan. There is strong governmental support for international HE scholarships for Saudi nationals and also much interest and investment in the same by Saudi businesses, which seek to invest in the preparation of a workforce with high skills and state-of-the-art knowledge. However, it is unclear as to what percentage of women travel abroad for study; some sources have recorded it to be as low as 20% (Bukhari and Denman, 2013) while others claim it approximates to 62% (Hassan, 2015).

Within KSA, HE is free for all local students (Alankary, 1998) and this applies to some extent to expatriates as well. Even when a student studies at a private college, his or her tuition fee is partly subsidised by the government or soft loans are granted. Additionally, in state universities a small monthly allowance is provided by the government to all students to motivate them to continue their studies, and free on-campus accommodation is offered to students moving from remote areas. Students can enter HE upon completing secondary education at the age of 18 or over. The duration of an undergraduate degree varies; in some courses, such as Education and Science, it is for four years, whereas for Engineering and Pharmacy the duration is five years, and for Medicine this extends to seven years. Most Saudi universities offer postgraduate level qualifications, including MA and PhD. The medium of instruction is English for technological and science-related fields, whereas Arabic is used for teaching all other subjects. Islamic studies and Arabic are obligatory at university level and the curriculum contains religious and moral content (Elyas and Picard, 2013).

With the exception noted earlier, gender segregation is strictly observed in all HE campuses in the Kingdom, but most universities have a student population including learners of both genders. However, the University of Petroleum and Minerals in Dhahran and the Islamic University in Al-Madinah are male-only universities, whereas Princess Noura bint Abdulrahman University in Riyadh is a female HEI. The provision of HE to women in KSA has significantly improved over the past few years. This is clearly reflected in the statistics. For instance, in 1970, there were only seven females studying at university level in the whole Kingdom, but by 2011 the number of females in HE had increased to 700,000, representing over 60% of all admissions to Saudi HEIs. It is not only at undergraduate level as 25% of admissions at Master's and Doctoral levels comprise females. This suggests, according to some scholars, that in the future Saudi women may be able to contribute positively to the socio-economic development of their homeland (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013).

Given the key role that the MoHE plays in facilitating the development of Saudi society, it is imperative to understand its vision, mission, policies and objectives. Its vision is to create a unique educational system that facilitates an international, competitive, knowledge-based community, whilst its mission is to facilitate knowledge dissemination within a suitable environment under KSA education policies. This is in addition to the implementation of effective research, support of innovation and establishment of a network amongst the community, wherein students' capabilities can be showcased. In 2015, the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Education were combined into one entity (MoHE, 2017).

1.3.1. Hierarchical/Governance Structure of Saudi HE

The MoHE conforms to the traditional work model of KSA governmental entities. It uses a centralised decision-making process, ensuring all points raised are brought before the Council of Higher Education (CoHE). This was established in 1963, aiming to monitor and regulate the HE system (see Figure 1). The Council, which is chaired by HM the King of Saudi Arabia, outlines

the rules and regulations for HEIs and their programmes. It is also delegated to develop overarching educational policy in KSA and to support finance and educational plans.

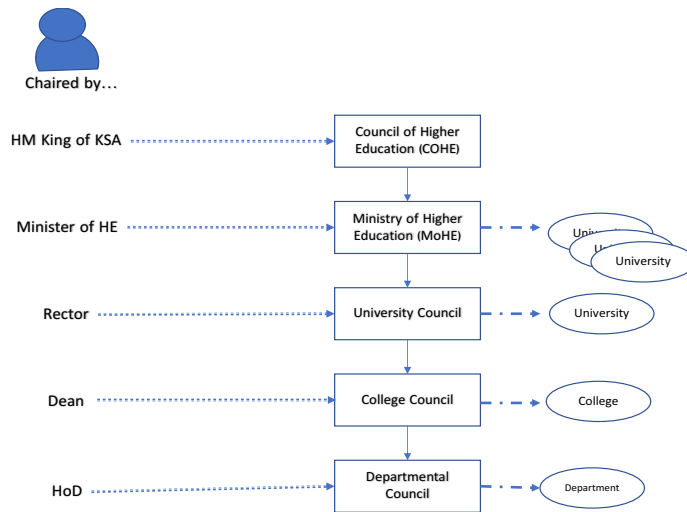


Figure 1: Hierarchical Structure of Saudi HE

Source: Adapted from Al-Eisa and Smith (2013)

On the level below the CoHE is positioned the MoHE, striving to ensure the implementation of the rules coming from the CoHE. The MoHE is also responsible for due diligence with regard to the operation and quality of all Saudi universities. However, the public universities have a different structure, being regulated by their own by-laws, as well as those of the CoHE, which collectively facilitate internal governance mechanisms (General Secretariat, 2007). With regard to internal governance, each HEI has three types of councils, namely the University Council, the Scientific Council, and the College and Department Councils (Al-Eisa and Smith, 2013) (see Figure 1). These are further discussed below:

- The University Council: Chaired by the Minister of HE, who often delegates to the University Rector, this council is responsible for ensuring compliance in terms of academic fairness and university strategic direction, whilst also being involved with university-level decisions and recruitment of academics, as well as the departmental

structures, developments and curriculum.

- **The Scientific Council:** a body equivalent to the “Academic Board/Research Board” in UK/Western universities, this is the highest academic council across the HEIs. Chaired by the Vice-Rector for Graduate Studies and Scientific Research, this focuses mainly on facilitating the assessment of academics for promotion, awards and bonuses.
- **College or Department Councils:** A team of individuals with a wealth of experience, who are in charge of the specialised academic programmes, student selection criteria and enrolment quota. Dealing with more than just the staff and the students, their task is to reach an ideal solution for both parties at college and department levels.

As such, each of the councils is able to undertake important decisions. The outcomes of the decisions made by the College/Department Councils are subsequently communicated in written form as recommendations (Al-Eisa and Smith, 2013) that feed into the final decision made by the Scientific Council and/or the University Council.

The HEI chosen for this study is one of the oldest in Saudi Arabia. It has been given the pseudonym Al-Jawda³ University. This university has gone through the accreditation process and has a good reputation for teaching and research both regionally and globally. It has a moderate range of faculties, including medicine, engineering, social sciences and humanities; it offers qualifications at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Both the staff and the student body include male and female members, originating locally and internationally.

1.3.2 Role of Academics in KSA HE

According to the CoHE (1998), there are many criteria for the recruitment of Saudi academics in HE. In this thesis, for consistency purposes, the term *academics* is used to refer to all research and teaching staff at HEIs. In terms of criteria, at all levels academics are required to satisfy teaching

³ In the Arabic language, *al-Jawda* means *quality*.

and/or research, as well as service requirements. The minimum requirements for professorship include a PhD degree from a recognised university, while for the positions of lecturer and instructor the minimum threshold includes a Master's degree or above with a 'Very Good' grade or higher from a Saudi university or from a recognised HEI. Table 1 presents a summary of the minimum criteria and a standard teaching load for academics. It is noteworthy, though, that the employment criteria for expatriates are less specific in that, for example, the alma mater or grade requirements are not mentioned in the regulations document (CoHE, 1997).

Table 1: The Minimum Criteria and Teaching Load for Academics

	Rank	Degree	Teaching Load	Teaching level
1	Professor	PhD	10 teaching units	teach any HE course
2	Associate Professor	PhD	12 teaching units	teach any HE course
3	Assistant Professor	PhD	14 teaching units	teach any HE course
4	Lecturer	Master's degree	16 teaching units, to be reduced if s/he is undertaking further studies.	teach UG courses according to their qualifications
5	Teacher Assistant	Bachelor's or Master's degree	16 teaching units to be reduced, if s/he is undertaking further studies.	teach introductory (Bachelor's only) or all courses at UG level (Master's)
6	Instructor	Master's degree	18 teaching units	teach UG courses

Source: Adapted from CoHE (1998)

In Saudi HEIs, undergraduate classes are generally taught by lecturers with MA degrees. Assistant tutors, who usually have first degrees, are given introductory courses at the undergraduate (UG) level; for instance, a holder of a Bachelor's degree can teach introductory courses or be an assistant tutor, whereas a holder of a Master's degree can teach other UG modules. A PhD holder can teach any HE course, including postgraduate (PG). Teacher training is not required, although it is preferred nowadays (Qureshi, 2006). Saudi nationals comprise about 70% of the academic staff. For example, in the case of Al-Jawda University, at the last

count there were nearly 5,000 academics, of whom nearly 3,500 were Saudi nationals. The majority of the Saudi nationals have earned their first degrees from KSA, while their postgraduate degrees are from abroad, as well as from local Saudi universities (Alebaikan, 2010).

The teaching units are weekly, theory-based lectures that continue for the whole semester, with a minimum duration of 50 minutes per session. There might also be weekly practical sessions or fieldwork with a minimum of 100 minutes duration. Academics are required to work 35 hours per week, which includes teaching, research, academic supervision, office hours, scientific committees and other academic work as given by the authorities concerned in a university. However, the ratio of contact hours to preparation varies according to academic rank. Vice-Rectors, Deans, and Vice- Deans are given a minimum of three teaching hours, along with administrative work. Academics are invited to participate in conferences and symposia nationally and/or internationally if they fulfil the following criteria:

1. The topics of the conference or symposium should be related to the academic field of specialisation and/or related responsibilities.
2. The interested participant should have the Department and College Councils' recommendation and the approval of the University Rector to attend national and international conferences and symposia (CoHE, 1998).

It is clear that the academics have a heavy workload as they must still find time in the working week to prepare and mark student work, as well as keep to the expectations of the university authorities. However, within this working week/workload they must yet find time for Quality Assurance (QA), which is becoming of more significance for achieving international university rating.

1.5 Quality in HE

HE is an international phenomenon and global benchmarking is increasingly used to rank HEIs (Mazi and Altbach, 2013). As part of QA regimes, governments and funding agencies use these rankings to finance educational activities in HEIs. HEIs also use such rankings to recruit new students and staff (Jarvis, 2014). Therefore, increasingly, HEIs are required to demonstrate the quality of their teaching and to be accountable to funding bodies (Kistan, 1999). Hence, the development and implementation of a QA system is one of the ways to address these demands (Kleijnen et al., 2011).

QA in HEIs is being practised in many countries across the world. For example, in 1999 South Africa established a Quality Promotion Unit to develop a QA system in its HEIs (Kistan, 1999), the functions of which included assisting universities to establish internal QA systems through self-evaluation, going through external quality audits for improvement and preparing programmes for accreditation. Likewise, Russia, which until recently had a very centralised system similar to KSA, has established a State Accreditation system, with the Department of Licensing, Accreditation and Attestation working in the Ministry of Education (Motova and Pykko, 2012). By 2008, more than 90% of Russian HEIs had been through at least one cycle of state accreditation. The government has also established a national agency for accreditation of educational programmes and developed an Internal Quality Management System in HEIs on the basis of ISO-9000, and Total Quality Management (TQM) standards; ISO-9000 denotes international standards applied to services quality, whereas TQM is an approach to quality.

Jordan, a neighbour to Saudi Arabia, has a Higher Education and Accreditation Commission (Aqlan et al., 2010), which was established in 2007 and mandated with responsibility for the quality of the institution and the study programmes that have internationally recognised criteria and emphasise continuous quality improvement (Aqlan et al., 2010).

Obviously, there are significant issues in the implementation of QA systems in a transnational context (Zwanikken et al., 2013), due to the fact that different countries may have different types of such systems, hence making it difficult to arrive at comparisons. Any system of QA needs to take into account the national culture as well as international trends. KSA has very strong national traditions, originating from Islam; therefore, the type of QA system it adopts will be distinctive.

1.5.1 Saudi HE and Quality

Over the past decade, the Saudi Government has tried to develop its HE sector so that it is consistent across the Kingdom, internationally comparable and relevant to the needs of modern society (Almusallam, 2009). This suggests that quality is a new concept in HE in Saudi Arabia (Albaqami, 2015). According to Al-Ghamdi and Tight (2013), interest in quality within the HE sector in KSA has been driven by the existence of ineffective teaching methods, the fast growing number of universities and enhanced competition amongst HEIs for recruiting students to raise their income.

To aid the development of the sector, the NCAAA was established in 2004. The Commission is a financially and administratively independent body tasked with establishing quality standards and accreditation of all post-secondary institutions, except the military. While the NCAAA's scope of work includes both the quality of institutions as a whole, and the quality of education and training programmes in each institution, it is accountable to KSA's CoHE. The core principles of NCAAA include continuous development, promoting variety in the programmes and subjects, adopting best international practices and making them compatible with local culture. Additionally, the NCAAA oversees closer collaboration between industry and academia, the use of modern teaching and learning methodologies to instil critical thinking and the inculcation of leadership and professional attitudes among the learners (NCAAA, 2013).

The Commission has specified the requirements for two separate and complementary types of QA: internal and external defined quality standards, and is working on the preparation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which would bring Saudi Arabia closer to established international practice. Internal QA is carried out by management within institutions, who must follow NCAAA standards. HEIs are required to produce self-evaluation studies, which are submitted to the external reviewer prior to their visit. The commission seeks assistance from international reviewers to assure quality of the evaluation of these studies. The outcome of external review is shared with the institution, and they are advised to develop a strategic plan for QA in their educational matters (NCAAA, 2009).

This Commission has followed a three-phase strategy for the development and implementation of the system for accreditation and QA (Almusallam, 2009). In the first stage, the commission has developed basic standards and procedures. In the second stage, members of staff in the HEIs are trained to reach these standards, with additional reference material and templates. All HEIs in KSA are asked to conduct preliminary self-evaluation studies based on the standards of the NCAAA. The third stage relates to full implementation, which involves periodic self-studies of programmes and institutions on a five-year cycle. The formal accreditation process of the HEIs started in 2010, with the commission identifying 11 standards for the evaluation of HEIs (NCAAA, 2013).

1.6 Research Context

As already mentioned, the NCAAA started its work in 2004. Since then, this system has been gaining acceptance by HEIs and has been implemented across the Kingdom, despite some substantial barriers (Darandari et al., 2009; Onsman, 2010). Firstly, there is the issue of distribution of power and leadership amongst Saudi and non-Saudi employees in HE. At the higher level, Rectors, Vice-Rectors, Deans and HoDs are Saudi nationals; whereas a number of

academic staff in HEIs are non-Saudi. Not many of the Saudi academics occupying these posts are trained to perform their role effectively, and this creates a problem, as most of the academics, who come from abroad, are well qualified and trained. Nonetheless, the Saudis receive preferential treatment and are involved in some of the decision-making processes unlike the non-Saudi staff. The overseas members of staff are required to implement those decisions, which are often taken without consultation. This, in turn, creates a feeling of disengagement from the process of QA on the part of the frontline teaching staff (Onsman, 2010) and the HoD may feel a lack of support from staff in implementing QA.

Moreover, the top-down approach to management and the centralised system of decision-making have a very significant and largely negative impact on the implementation of QA in Saudi HE and, as Onsman (2010) suggests, may regress the achievement of quality at such institutions. Although plans for academic development of the KSA have been made and attempts to apply changes have been undertaken, the implementation of a quality culture still seems challenging in many Saudi HEIs, due to a number of culture-related factors (Darandari et al., 2009; Onsman, 2011). Many of the HoDs may consequently have little control over the implementation of QA in their department and do not receive support from senior management.

Furthermore, strict social and religious codes and local cultural values in Saudi society can hinder the creation of a world-class academic environment in the KSA (Krieger, 2007; Onsman, 2010). The indiscriminate application of neo-liberal values in Saudi HE has encountered some opposition, leading to accusations of westernisation and neglect of the Islamic identity of the community and the local system of values (Elyas and Picard, 2013). Thus, it has not been easy to establish a networked QA system grounded in shared values (Onsman, 2010). Although NCAAA requires every institution to establish its own QA model, the implementation of QA systems in KSA has not been as smooth as expected, with some institutions failing to adopt NCAAA standards, with only three out of 33 of the institutions participating in the QA process

being granted institutional accreditation (Albaqami, 2015)⁴. This highlights the indifferent success experienced in establishing quality in Saudi universities. HoDs, who do support QA, may therefore not receive the institution-wide approval for its implementation.

It is also evident that leadership at the academic programmes level plays a significant role in achieving QA in Saudi universities (Onsman, 2010). This position is generally occupied by an HoD and is categorised as middle level leadership. However, there is little understanding of the role of HoDs in achieving quality and a much clearer picture of this is needed in order to determine their impact on Saudi HE. There is a growing body of research about the role of HoDs generally (Knight and Trowler, 2001; Sotirakou, 2004; Meek et al., 2010; Floyd and Dimmock, 2011; Floyd, 2012; Mercer and Pogolian, 2013); however, little attention is paid specifically to HoDs and their role in QA and in the context of KSA. This study presents an opportunity to explore and understand the role of HoDs in the implementation of QA in the Saudi HE context.

1.6.1 Research Rationale

The role of HoDs in achieving quality in their departments has been highlighted in literature. Saunders and Sin's (2015) study, conducted in Scotland, found HoDs acted as gatekeepers between senior management and staff, passing messages between them for implementing quality processes. This indicated that they were not making decisions or having a great influence on QA themselves. The main areas where HoDs were found to have an impact on quality were in research and teaching, according to Juhl and Christensen's (2008) study conducted in Denmark. It is known that there are many demands on an HoD's time, as Kok and McDonald (2015) found in their study of UK universities, and it is consequently difficult to ascertain HoDs' input within the QA processes, or even their understanding of their role in such quality initiatives. This is why it is important to explore the perceptions of HoDs on QA, especially in a different

⁴ The latest available data is from Albaqami (2015) as the NCAAA online documentation does not provide any more up-to-date numbers.

context other than the Western contexts that have mainly been investigated. There is a paucity of literature on Middle East HEIs, and this is why more research is needed to find out the situation of HoDs in Saudi Arabia, which is attempting to become a global knowledge economy. Quality is an important factor in achieving international status and there is a need to investigate the challenges HoDs may have in implementing QA in Saudi universities, given the hierarchal structure of such institutions.

1.6.2 Researcher's Background and Origins of the Thesis

This research study stems in part from my personal interest in developing high quality education in the KSA. Following a four-year experience as a teacher and head teacher, and a further five years as a Director of the Educational Media and Public Relations Department of the Ministry of Education, I realised that there was a pressing need to improve educational quality in the Kingdom. Having experience of the Saudi educational system and later in educational leadership roles, it came to my attention that Saudi students may have not been able to compete with their Western peers on an equal basis. Therefore, as an educational researcher, I decided to focus on the issue of quality in the sector of education (my MA) and higher education in the KSA (my doctoral study).

I gained additional insights into various aspects of educational reforms in the UK when I undertook an MA in Educational Leadership and Management. Studying and researching at the University of Nottingham made me alert to other aspects with regard to educational developments in the UK. Due to the accessibility I had to schools in the local area, I was able to investigate the quality of schooling in England. Furthermore, I identified specific attributes and features that could be implemented into the quality of the Saudi schooling system, taking cultural differences into account.

Following my Master's degree, I decided to continue researching leadership and quality but in the HE sector, rather than in schools. This led to my current research study, as I sought a better understanding of quality implementation system in Saudi HE and the role of educational leaders in achieving its objectives. Having experience of both the UK and Saudi HE systems, and taking into consideration my future career aspirations, I believe that the findings of my current study will be beneficial to the educational field in Saudi Arabia, where there is still a need for more quality specialists.

A meticulous literature search found very little theoretical work in relation to QA in Saudi HE and the role of leadership in it. Since there is a noticeable gap in literature, it is expected that the research findings of this study will be beneficial, not only to myself and the Saudi MoHE, but will also contribute to the literature on Saudi HE. This study has involved a thorough investigation of the principles, implications and limitations of the development and implementation of a QA system in Saudi Arabia – one of the aspiring leaders in education in the Middle East – in order to achieve the research objectives.

1.6.3 Research Questions

Based upon the research problem and research rationale, this study explored perceptions and realities of QA implementation in Saudi Arabia and addressed the following questions:

1. How, if at all, do HoDs at an elite Saudi university achieve quality within their departments?
2. What factors are said to influence the HoDs in trying to achieve departmental quality?
3. How does the selection and development of HoDs influence their achievement of quality?

1.6.4 The Cultural Context of the KSA and the UK

Culture plays a significant role in the application and implementation of quality in Saudi HEs. However, as noted earlier, educational reforms based on neo-liberal ideologies have been uncritically adopted by the policymakers seeking to reform Saudi HE. This in turn has invited much criticism from the individuals who believe that the values of KSA, as an Islamic country, conflict with the Western values integrated with neo-liberal reforms implemented at universities. There are, consequently, tensions between the reforms implemented and the expectations of quality arising out of these, vis-à-vis the local culture and context. Therefore, since this study relies mostly on literature from the UK, a comparison was drawn between Saudi and UK values, as elements underpinning the educational systems of both countries. One of the first and most comprehensive studies on cultural values in the work place and in management was conducted by Geert Hofstede in the 1960s and 1970s. Although the study was criticised for its narrow scope, as it was conducted on a single company within the IT sector (i.e. IBM), it resulted in a set of dimensions that could be applicable across societies, though with a degree of caution. Five of Hofstede's dimensions (see Figure 2) were deemed to be of relevance to any comparison between the Saudi and the British approaches to HE in general, and HE leadership in particular. These are power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation.

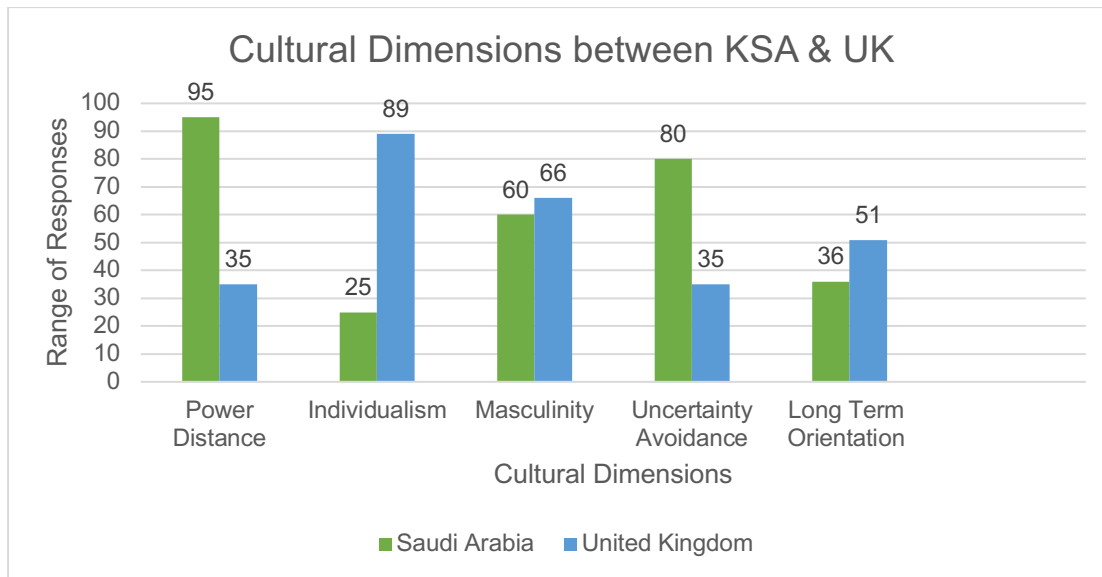


Figure 2: Cultural Dimensions of KSA and UK

Source: Adapted from Hofstede Centre (2017b)

The power distance dimension related to how far inequality was accepted within society. In this regard, Saudi Arabia (score of 95) differs considerably from the UK (score of 35), which indicates that Saudi structures are very hierarchical, while in Britain egalitarian principles are more valued (Hofstede Centre, 2017). Those cultural features of society can be applied to a managerial culture, where Saudi managers tend to be more autocratic and employees (subordinates) expect to be instructed on their actions. In the UK, however, the management of employees seems to be underpinned by a sense of fair play and equal treatment.

The individualism-collectivism continuum depicts the level of interdependence between members of society and is best represented by the frequency of use of personal pronouns, i.e. 'I' vs. 'we'. While Saudi Arabia is considered a collectivist society (with a score of 25) meaning group loyalty is ranked highly, the UK is a highly individualistic society (score of 89), where individual idiosyncrasies and uniqueness are pursued. Therefore, family links and professional relationships in Saudi are seen in moral terms, which can affect recruitment and management decisions, while the UK culture focuses more on achieving personal goals and employee

fulfilment. The masculinity-femininity dimension refers to societal attitude to achievement, namely the so-called masculine qualities of high competition and being the best, versus so-called feminine features of the quality of achievement and enjoyment of activities. In this regard, KSA (score of 60) and the UK (score of 66) do not differ much, which indicates that the system of values is success driven and oriented towards competition, performance and equity.

The uncertainty avoidance dimension explains how society members prepare themselves for unknown situations in the future; hence, regulations, rules, planning and flexibility play an important role in this dimension. While Saudi Arabia (score of 80) maintains a rigid code of beliefs and behaviours to avoid uncertainty, the UK (score of 35) tends to be more flexible in terms of adjusting the rules to actual needs.

The long-term orientation dimension reflects the modes in which societies hold onto their roots and the past, while planning for the future and handling the present and the inevitable development. While Saudi Arabia (score of 36) is a more normative culture in which traditions are highly valued and changes are approached cautiously, in the UK (score of 51) traditions are equally highly ranked, but changes are dealt with in a more open and pragmatic manner.

The fact that the KSA and the UK score quite differently on Hofstede's model alerts us to the danger of simply importing into Saudi Arabia a quality system designed and developed elsewhere, and in accordance with a differing system of values (Elyas and Picard, 2013). Furthermore, it needs to be noted that Hofstede's study refers mostly to the business context, while the initial study was based only on a single company. Therefore, the cultural categories established by Hofstede can be limiting. Nonetheless, they seem to provide an element of relevance to the main differences between the two countries. In addition to this, globalisation is also having an influence on HE in Saudi Arabia.

1.6.5 Globalisation and its Impact on KSA

The processes of globalisation involve political, economic, social and cultural elements of modern life. This is having a significant impact on Saudi Arabia, which is a predominantly young society (Thompson, 2017). Although the influence of globalisation in the Kingdom is increasingly evident, the social and cultural effects are not yet fully realised. It is clear that Saudi Arabia, being an oil economy, supports globalisation processes on an economic level, as it competes in international markets. However, there are strong voices in favour of the traditional, conservative lifestyle. These voices may weaken over time; for instance, KASP is increasing its reach and large numbers of young Saudis are being given the opportunity to study and travel overseas. The Saudi government seeks to include the younger generation in its reforms, in order to have successful governmental developments and maintain stability, especially as young people are building relationships with their counterparts in other countries. Saudi Arabia is witnessing their young people becoming more politically aware and more conscious of the restrictions within their traditional society (Thompson, 2017).

Yet there are still many who feel their identity is being threatened by globalisation and this may well be justified; Thompson (2017) describes how Saudi undergraduates visiting Japan were shocked to discover that the level of globalisation in Saudi Arabia far outweighed that in Japan. Although 70% of young Saudis believed social media was having a very negative effect on their society, they can nevertheless be seen as avid users of social media (Thompson, 2017). The inevitable changes that come with globalisation may be transforming Saudi society but Moaddel and De Jong (2013) found that the changes most wanted were political transformation and education. Nonetheless, there will still be many who feel that Saudi Arabia is taking on Western norms in its race for globalisation, when it should be protecting its own unique identity.

Introducing QA into HE is one of the ways to transform education, enhance students skills in order to equip them with necessary tools to engage with the globalised world and participate in the complicated issues that globalisation carries (Tayan, 2016). There is no doubt that Saudi Arabia needs their education reforms to develop young people who can meet the needs of a global knowledge economy, especially in view of the diminishing oil economy. The country cannot afford to ignore large numbers of young people without the skills to deal with their labour market needs (Tayan, 2016). Such neglect would likely result in mass unemployment and a dissatisfied population of young people, leading to political instability.

In the wake of 9/11 the KSA sought to change its public image and counter extremist ideologies by reforming its educational system and launching peace education (Hilal and Denman, 2013). This effort was also bolstered by the country's desire (and need) to switch from an oil-based economy to one based on knowledge (Elyas and Picard, 2013). To achieve those aims, the aforementioned KASP initiatives became the main means. Furthermore, more recently, a long-term strategy called Vision 2030 has been introduced to reduce the economy's dependence on oil. Apart from reforms in other sectors, there are extensive reforms to the education system. For example, the Saudi government has announced the privatisation of HEIs, which makes Saudi HEIs financially and administratively independent, so the system will allow Saudi universities to build their rules and regulations by themselves according to the policies that agreed by the Board of Trustees in the university itself. Other changes that bring Saudi closer to international educational standards include cooperation between some Saudi universities and high-ranking international HEIs as well as the attempts to tackle/reduce gender segregation by giving women more rights. There are also some proposed reforms such as the recruitment of academics on a contractual basis instead of life-long employment.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters, which are organised in the following way:

Chapter One provides the background of the study, discusses the research problem and the research questions framing the study as well as the cultural context adopted in this investigation. It also presents the organisation of the thesis.

Chapter Two reviews the related literature. It starts by looking at the concept of quality, different approaches to achieving quality in HE and strategies to enhance quality of teaching and learning. It then moves on to consider key elements of the HoD's role in HE, the factors that facilitate and/or hinder his or her role, and HoD selection and professional development. Finally, the role of HoDs in achieving quality is addressed.

Chapter Three describes the research paradigm, ontological and epistemological assumptions, the methodological approach, the sampling strategies, the methods and procedures of data collection, the data analysis procedure and the ethical considerations within the current study.

Chapter Four analyses the qualitative and quantitative findings from the data, related to how HoDs understand quality and the strategies they use to achieve it. These findings are then compared with previous findings from the reviewed literature.

Chapter Five focuses on presenting an analysis of the research findings relevant to the factors that facilitate and/or hinder HoDs' achievement of quality, as well as discussing these findings in relation to the existing literature.

Chapter Six concentrates on analysing the findings related to the process of selecting HoDs' and their professional development and links these findings with those from the literature review.

Chapter Seven discusses and further interprets the themes that emerged from the data analysis. In addition, it describes the study's theoretical and practical contribution to knowledge. It also provides some implications and recommendations for achieving better quality. The challenges and limitations of this study are presented and the chapter provides some suggestions for further research.

1.7 Summary

This chapter has provided a background of the study, its purpose and significance, and has presented the rationale of the study, in addition to the research questions. It has located the study within the cultural context, using Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions. Within the chapter there has been a review of the context of the study, including the culture and the hierarchical structure of Saudi HE. There has been a presentation of the overview of the chapters in this thesis. The next chapter presents a review of the literature relating to quality and HoDs in HE.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on the role of HoDs and their contribution to the achievement of quality in HE. It begins by exploring the concept of quality and then considers strategies to achieve quality in HEIs. The role of HoDs and the factors facilitating or hindering them in the effective performance of that role are also examined. Finally, the selection and professional development of HoDs is discussed. There are various terms in the literature to refer to the individual who heads an academic department in a university. For the sake of consistency in this thesis, the term HoD is generally employed but where reference is made to ‘middle manager’, this can also be understood as reference to the head of an academic department.

In order to source the literature for this review, a number of strategies were used, including online database searches, manual searches and use of key contacts. For the peer reviewed material, a wide range of databases pertaining to literature on education, including ProQuest education databases, ERIC, British Education Index, Australian Education Index, ASSIA, EBSCO host, and Google Scholar were searched. Key search terms included: leadership and quality in HE; leadership and QA in HE; HoD and QA, implementation of QA System, and QA in Saudi HE. In addition, I carried out a manual search, and looked for references in relevant studies to identify further appropriate papers. In addition, a number of key academics in the university under investigation involved in planning and implementation of QA in Saudi Arabia were also approached,

and they identified some useful documents relating to the selected university and Saudi HE in general. The Saudi Cultural Bureau in London was also contacted, and the search for literature was extended to the Bureau's on-line library. Finally, I made use of grey literature such as reports, newspaper articles, guidelines and the handbook published by NCAAA. It was found that while there was a considerable amount of empirical literature on leadership and QA in HE in general, the research reported had predominantly been conducted in developed countries and studies within the Eastern or Asian context were scarce. Further, research pertaining to the roles of HoDs and quality in Saudi Higher Education was also non-existent, leading to the decision to include applicable literature from other geographical and cultural contexts, including developed and developing countries. While specific findings from these studies may not be relevant to the current study, their coverage of broader concepts like "leadership", "professional development" and "quality" were perceived to have resonance for this work.

The review of the literature has been structured thematically, and includes major themes of importance to this research such as concept of quality in HE. overarching approaches for quality achievement. Strategies for measuring and achieving quality, role of HoDs in HE and HoD selection as well as professional development. The following sections review literature on each of the identified themes.

2.2 Concepts of Quality in HE

Quality is a relative (Gvaramadze, 2008) and multi-dimensional (Pounder, 2000) concept. As the concept has emerged largely from the field of industrial production, quality is difficult to define precisely and interpret in the HE context (Houston, 2008). In 2006, the Quality Culture Project of the European University Association⁵ investigated 134

⁵ "The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 47 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and to its interaction with a range of other

European universities and found two approaches to defining quality. The first aimed to ensure compliance with external standards, while the second focused on processes of development and improvement. Theoretically, therefore, quality can be understood broadly as (a) a process of compliance and accountability and (b) a process of enhancement and improvement. Furthermore, quality is seen as an on-going process and a goal that needs to be pursued continuously (Kleijnen et al., 2011). However, the way a particular institution defines quality, and consequently commits itself to either one or both of these approaches, is determined by factors like organisational culture, values, state politics, institutional policies, educational philosophies and the influence of stakeholders (Harvey and Stensaker, 2008).

With reference to the HE context, Harvey and Green (1993) cited in Harvey and Stensaker (2008) list five key dimensions of quality as illustrated in Table 2. The authors note that the 1993 classification was devised under different labour market conditions, but claim that it was prescient in forecasting subsequent developments. Hence, it was reproduced in 2008. The authors believe it has enduring relevance because it acknowledges the transformative purpose of education.

European and international organisations. EUA ensures that the independent voice of European universities is heard, wherever decisions are being taken that will impact on their activities' (EUA, 2017).

Table 2: Five Approaches to Defining Quality

Quality	Specification
Exceptionalism	Fulfilling and going beyond pre-defined standards
Perfection or Consistency	Having good quality student intake and being consistent in academic evaluation
Fitness for Purpose	HE service should meet its stated purpose
Value for Money	How much return has been obtained by attending this course or qualification
Transformation	Bringing positive change in the learners, empowering them and developing their critical thinking skills

Source: Harvey and Green (1993)

Since the aim of HE is to meet future societal and economic needs and to develop independent and self-fulfilled learners, the transformative approach to quality seems to be the most highly valued. It can be argued that as education is a process, rather than a service, the expected outcome is perceived in terms of transformed individuals, and not satisfied customers (Harvey and Green, 1993; Harvey and Stensaker, 2008). However, in view of the fact that economics is exerting increasing influence over the HE sector in the contemporary world, according to a number of researchers (Henkel, 2005; Veiga and Sarrico, 2014) HEIs, like the corporate sector, have also begun to pay greater attention to efficiency, value for money and fitness-for-purpose.

The following section explores various perspectives on quality amongst different stakeholders in HE, especially as these different viewpoints can influence the achievement of quality.

2.2.1 Different Understandings and Perceptions of Quality within HE

The concept of quality in HE has different meanings for different stakeholders, including academics, employers, students, and parents (Chua, 2004; Houston, 2008; Kleijnen et al., 2014; Wang, 2014). Furthermore, individual perceptions of quality can affect

performance in quality-related tasks. In other words, how individuals understand the situation plays a role in determining what actions they take (Cruickshank, 2003; Houston, 2008; Kleijnen et al., 2014). Thus, in order to improve quality, it is important to first understand how each of these stakeholders perceives it. Houston (2008), for instance, outlines three different interpretations of quality held by the different parties involved in the HE sector. These include the economic perspective, held by employers and industry, the societal perspective, often favoured by families of current and potential students and the wider community and the educational perspective preferred by academic disciplines and education suppliers.

Chua's (2004) small-scale Canadian study found similar differences in the various perceptions of quality and its importance by various stakeholders. Students focused on the quality of the educational process (i.e. teaching and courses) and outputs (what they would take with them after graduation), while parents focused on inputs (such as institutional reputation and ranking) and outputs (the potential employability of their child). On the other hand, academics tended to view quality more holistically, emphasising processes as well as outputs and unsurprisingly, employers focused mainly on outputs (i.e. the skills they needed from graduates).

More recently, Barandiaran-Galdós et al. (2012) used an online questionnaire with a much larger sample, comprising over 1,000 academics from Spanish universities. They found that academics view quality in terms of an all-encompassing approach that considers all aspects of student learning and transformation, including their future careers. This was in contrast to the students, whose focus was on employability as a measure of quality, rather than meeting standards and objectives. It is also clear that academics have a different interpretation of quality to employers, a situation, which can potentially lead to a conflict of interest in the ongoing reform process in any given HEI.

Whilst employers perceive universities as being places where professionals are trained, academics continue to see their role as transforming individuals (Johansson and Felten, 2014).

In addition, Anderson and Johnson (2006) found that academics regard QA as a process that actually undermines what they, themselves, understand by "quality" because it adopts an instrumental and minimalistic approach. Academics have strong views about their role in any quality context, understanding quality as enhancement and improvement, rather than compliance and accountability to external standards (Kleijnen et al., 2011, 2014; 2013). Clearly, if academics adopt the view that they are being held to account, rather than being supported to enhance their teaching, this is likely to change their behaviour. As perceptions about the value of HE are linked to the quality of service provided (Ledden et al., (2011) and academics are integral to the delivery of such a service, it follows that they must be fully involved in quality initiatives.

It is clear that there are various understandings, dependent on the stakeholder's perspective and, ultimately, his or her best interests. Hence, it is important to identify what is meant by quality in an HE context; therefore, in the next section different approaches to achieving quality are discussed.

2.3 Overarching Approaches for Achieving Quality

Blackmur's (2004) study identified three forms of QA: self-regulation; third-party QA; and judicial intervention. In self-regulation, the HEIs themselves control their activities related to QA, whereas in third-party QA, an external body controls the QA system. In judicial intervention, complaints related to quality matters are brought to the courts. These three approaches to quality are not mutually exclusive, and it is possible to have all three in one QA system. So, although the UK HE sector is largely self-regulated, it has developed third-party QA systems (Blackmur, 2004) and it is still possible to have judicial

intervention, if a student takes the university to court. In the UK, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) has been established to receive complaints from students whose cases against particular institutions have not been addressed to their satisfaction (Turnbull et al., 2008). Furthermore, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), an independent body "entrusted with monitoring and advising on standards and quality in UK HE" has also been established to provide oversight (QAA, 2017).

In the KSA context, however, self-regulation and third party QA are the main approaches to achieving quality. Nothing in existing literature indicates that students have recourse to judicial interventions to settle their issues with HEIs, which is probably linked to the fact that the hierarchical culture and monarchy rule in KSA are unlikely to be conducive to such an approach to quality. Before the establishment of the NCAAA in 2004, QA was the responsibility of individual HEIs and some professional bodies were active in the certification of practitioners (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013); however, the current QA system in Saudi HEIs includes compulsory accreditation from the NCAAA (Almusallam, 2007). Nevertheless, although institutions and programmes are at liberty to choose to be accredited internationally as well as in the Saudi HE context, concerns have been expressed about the over-dependency on external agencies for the management of quality (Darandari and Cardew, 2013). It is, therefore, important that the system for QA in HEIs in KSA is carefully reviewed.

Cardoso et al. (2015) identify three approaches to achieving quality in education, and their model has been used to analyse the empirical data generated by this doctoral study. The team surveyed 1782 Portuguese academics between 2008–2012 and found three approaches to quality, namely compliance, consistency and culture. The study also showed that institutional culture of quality is more valued than compliance, even though

it is harder to achieve. Over two thirds of obstacles to quality identified in the study by Cardoso et al. related to quality as culture, far more than were related to quality as compliance or consistency. This is not unexpected as compliance and consistency are fairly straightforward, whereas quality as culture is influenced by many different factors. This may also reflect the fact that culture is dependent on compliance and consistency for ensuring that quality is embedded in the organisation. These three aspects of quality including compliance, consistency and culture are discussed in further detail in the following sections.

2.3.1 Quality as Compliance

Compliance is often the first step to achieving quality of outcomes, as it requires institutions to adhere to regulations and/or standards imposed upon them externally. However, although compliance may be advantageous to efforts to achieve quality, unintended consequences, such as tensions between academic and managerial staff often arise as a result (Cardoso et al., 2015). This arises from the paradox between a superficial quality culture enforced through compliance and formalism, and a genuine quality culture committed to enhancing the learning and teaching provided by the HEI (Land and Rattray, 2014, p.21). This observation is supported by Westerheijden and Kohoutek (2014) who note that an increased focus on institutional compliance, as opposed to seeing the regulations as a source of guidance, could potentially transform HEIs into "slaves" to the QA agency involved, thereby reducing QA to a culture of 'box-ticking' rather than engagement in actual quality improvements. This could also prevent academics from facilitating discussions, reflection, and debate (Bellingham, 2008; Blackmur, 2004). Furthermore, Land and Rattray (2014) contend that a top-down managerial approach could generate a compliance culture and/or a high risk of rejection, hence acting as a barrier to QA implementation.

Achieving compliance within an HEI context is further complicated by the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders and the need to develop specific tools, criteria, and procedures to measure improvements in different subjects and areas (Damian et al., 2015). Disciplinary differences were also found to be important as they entailed different approaches to QA (Vukasovic, 2014). In the sciences, for example, academics emphasise quantification and technical elements of internal QA, whereas in the humanities, they tend to focus on procedures and the application of qualitative methods. Moreover, while Dos Santos Martins et al. (2013) identified facilities, such as labs, as the major unit for determining quality in engineering departments, this may have far less relevance in other disciplines wherein a more theoretical approach to study is taken.

In addition to different perceptions and approaches to quality compliance, defining and measuring outcomes that demonstrate quality is also challenging. In this context, Noaman et al. (2017) have drawn upon data from a large Saudi university to outline five criteria for measurement of quality. These include relevance of scientific topics for students, alignment of the curriculum with the needs of the labour market, academic qualifications, the role of the curriculum in improving student skills and self-capabilities and the professional experience of staff. These imply that quality standards would be beneficial for HEIs in terms of enhancing their teaching and learning. Quality standards are usually developed by a national body with the remit to oversee quality, such as QAA in the UK and NCAAA in KSA. However, HEIs can find it challenging to interpret and implement government strategies, initiatives and policies to institutional objectives due to their individual targets (Westerheijden and Kohoutek, 2014). For example, a study conducted in North America by Skolnik (2016) identifies challenges pertinent to the implementation of national level generic quality standards across various institutions and disciplines, whereas Johnson et al. (2002) note that, in the Australian context, important but non-essential tasks such as compliance with QA standards serve to fragment the time

available for work, thereby producing frustration and reduced job-satisfaction amongst academics.

Standards compliance is usually monitored through accreditation with an external agency. This serves to confirm that standards are being met and people can trust what is being offered (Darandari and Cardew, 2013). In short, national and/or international accreditation, which according to Harvey (2004) is about establishing the ranking, legality and suitability of a programme and/or an institution. Through accreditation, a regulator protects students, employers and the public by assessing if institutions fulfil predefined standards of educational quality (Schierenbeck, 2013). However, there is considerable debate over the usefulness of QA accreditation, especially when it has an accountability focus (Harvey and Williams, 2010).

Harvey (2004), for example, sees accreditation as a politicised process, in which power shifts from academics to managers, while failing to include all the other affected individuals. This view positions accreditation as just one part of a continuous processes that requires compliance and accountability, representing managerialism infringing on academic freedom and autonomy and thus harming the experience and skills of academics. Although QA, which includes accreditation, is confined to bureaucratic formalities (Ehlers, 2009), the enhanced accountability, compliance and surveillance regimes are considered detrimental to traditional academic freedom, and thus to genuine quality achievement (Morrish and Sauntson, 2016). For some, accreditation is just an additional burden besides assessment, audit and other kinds of standards and outcome monitoring (Harvey, 2004). However, this view is challenged by the findings of a study conducted in the Netherlands involving 226 academics across 18 university departments, which found that accreditation played a positive role in the improvement of HEIs

(Kleijnen et al., 2011). Therefore, the role of accreditation in quality has also attracted some debate.

The situation in KSA is less complicated, as all public HEIs are funded by the MoHE, and are expected to comply with the NCAAA standards (Onsman, 2010), since this commission is under the supervision of MoHE. Additionally, although the Saudi HE reform agenda strives to facilitate flexible decision-making at the university level, there is a traditional compliance-focused culture in the KSA, marked by an absence of institutional autonomy (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013). This leads to a lag in the implementation of autonomous self-governance in HE, for despite devolved decision-making to HEIs, the KSA government nonetheless monitors the academic institutions, thereby sustaining the centralised approach. This means that HEIs in KSA are more likely to be inclined towards a compliance approach to quality, though this aspect needs to be further explored.

However, this does not mean that compliance should be the only approach worth considering. Darandari and Cardew (2013) have argued that whilst compliance with the NCAAA regulations and efforts to acquire accreditation are important, in fact it is the maintenance of a quality learning organisation on a daily basis that should be the overarching objective for the HEIs. For instance, through a case study conducted in two colleges of a comprehensive Saudi university, Alghamdi (2016) found that the process of becoming accredited was hindered by staff resistance and inadequate resources. Additionally, Onsman (2010) suggests that to establish the overall impact of compliance with QA requirements in HEIs, the KSA government will need to monitor graduate quality over a specified period of time. Quality may, therefore, be linked to consistency.

2.3.2 Quality as Consistency

Viewing quality as consistency means focusing on processes and sets of specifications that are maintained over time (Harvey and Green, 1993; Cardoso et al., 2015). In this approach to quality, there is zero tolerance for defects, and efforts are made to do things right from the very first time a product or service is produced. This strategy of quality can be appropriate in making academic judgements and securing reliable management information. However, in the areas of teaching and learning, consistency is not seen as either a preferred or practical approach, as it turns quality into a relative concept (Harvey, 2008).

It is argued that in the context of HE it is nearly impossible to measure any type of outputs, while stakeholders have concerns over the efforts to measure them. There are also organisational challenges in the implementation of consistent approaches to quality, of which diversity in organisational sub-cultures across various departments and schools happens to be clearly identifiable. Therefore, a lack of consistency in organisational culture may be detrimental to the implementation of a consistent approach to quality (Brdulak, 2014). However, from the educational point of view, limited consistency could be seen as part of a learning process, for instance while in the business sector, consistency determines success, in the educational sector, mistakes are seen as unavoidable and therefore permissible to a certain degree. It is asserted in the literature on institutional diversity that external agencies such as QA can play an important role in standardising outcomes by evaluating the quality of different HEIs using similar tools and measures. In such instances, quality standards are stated in generic terms and their applicability is dependent on the practices of the agencies and review teams. This suggests that a QA system, irrespective of whether it encourages diversity or

homogeneity, is greatly influenced by the daily practices of HEIs, although this requires further investigation (Skolnik, 2016).

In the KSA context, it is observed that accreditation standards of NCAAA offer a robust base to develop consistency in academic standards across HEIs. However, it gives flexibility to each institution to develop a quality culture and embed quality as a usual practice (Darandari and Cardew, 2013). At the national level, consistency in academic standards is being pursued through the introduction of the NQF. The NQF helps to maintain consistency of standards and student mobility across HEIs and academic programmes. This enables the qualifications from all HEIs of the Kingdom to transfer credits, identifying consistency of standards and recognising prior learning (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013). Another aspect of consistency is related to the role of course and/or programme co-ordinators, who are appointed in academic departments to co-ordinate teaching and assessment-related work. This helps in achieving and maintaining quality consistency at the programme level. However, a recent study conducted in the UK found that programme leaders often do not have the proper training for this role (Cahill et al., 2015). Hence, much depends on the culture within an HEI and its departments and the value placed on quality therein, and that is why it is important to explore the perceptions of the parties involved in quality initiatives.

2.3.3 Quality as Culture

An integrated quality culture means that all the individuals in a particular institution are responsible for achieving quality, in addition to its continuous improvement (Harvey and Green, 1993). This is achieved through consensus (Dias, Cardoso, Rosa and Amaral, 2014), but it also demands leadership and high-level management support (Harvey and Stensaker, 2008). Importantly, if a change to processes, regulations or systems is not led by senior management, then such efforts to achieve quality goals are more likely to be

unsuccessful (Turnbull et al., 2008). Similarly, US research suggests that if quality improvement is linked with the overall strategic planning of the institution, collecting interim feedback and evaluating the progress longitudinally can be beneficial for quality improvement in HEIs and, therefore, becomes a strategy to achieving quality (Buchanan, 1995).

Introducing a culture which values quality and leads to its enhancement would seem to be a logical outcome. However, according to Harvey and Stensaker (2008), it remains unclear what a culture of quality would look like in HE. Such a culture requires a foundation of trust, continuous improvement, and self-reflection, all of which set the building blocks for HEIs to become learning organisations that inherently consider quality on a daily basis (Darandari and Cardew, 2013). This may require strengthening of a pro-quality organisational culture or changing the existing one so that staff obtain a good understanding of quality and are encouraged to mould their attitudes and values towards it (Darandari et al., 2009). The literature also reveals the need to focus on the transformation of learners, institutions and the commitment of staff in order to achieve the successful implementation of QA systems (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2007; Cardoso, Rosa and Stensaker, 2015). Clearly, in connection to the discussion above, the HEI culture, alongside any forces of resistance within an organisation, can impede the processes aimed at ensuring quality (Cruickshank, 2003).

Several approaches designed to effect a change in culture have been identified by Pryor (2010), such as assessing the existing culture and operational guidelines, undertaking training needs assessment for the staff involved, creating high performing teams, empowering employees and understanding and applying change management concepts and tools. In a study by Kleijnen et al. (2014), it was found that staff in effective academic departments considered quality to be evidenced in continuous improvement

and the alignment of their own personal views with those of the organisation. Conversely, in less efficient departments, staff values were not congruent with preferred organisational values, thus hindering the achievement of departmental quality. This indicates the importance of shared values and objectives of departments and their organisations. Moreover, a survey of more than 300 staff working on 20 programmes delivered by English universities found that participation in QA was higher when academics believed the process was being undertaken to improve the student experience, as opposed to controlling the academics (Trullen and Rodríguez, 2013), which exemplifies the significance of developing a culture of quality.

It must be noted, however, that developing a quality culture is challenging and requires a wide range of strategies. Harvey and Stensaker (2008) offer nine recommendations for academic leaders to instil a culture of quality, of which the most pertinent are: 1) aiming for a quality culture as a way of life rather than rigidly prescribed rules; 2) viewing quality culture as a frame of mind and not merely an assessment of outputs; 3) developing individuals' ownership of the implemented quality culture to prevent the loss of its value and 4) preventing the view of quality as a managerial fashion that restrains academic freedom.

In the KSA, despite the fact that almost all Saudi HEIs have established quality units, quality deanships, and departmental committees to work on quality assignments at different levels (Darandari and Cardew, 2013), quality initiatives are still not common, and thereby, to a great extent, there is a lack of quality culture. This may be because the QA system in the KSA is in its infancy and because Saudi universities have centralised top-down managerial systems, which focus on control rather than the freedom to improve (Darandari et al., 2009). Although the role of the HoD is to oversee the quality achievement effort, this has not been specifically assessed in previous studies, and this

represents a significant research gap. In the next section, various ways in which quality can be measured and achieved are discussed.

2.4 Strategies for Measuring and Achieving Quality

The way that people perceive quality has an influence on the overarching approaches they take, which in turn have an effect on the specific strategies individuals adopt to achieve it. A variety of strategies can be used to achieve quality in HE, but QA has become a common term used for all forms of external and internal quality review, evaluation and monitoring (Harvey, 2004; Campbell and Carayannis, 2013). QA, thus, is a set of procedures that are designed to assure high quality maintenance, enhancement and achievement, so that parents, students and employers can be confident about quality within a particular institution (Darandari and Cardew, 2013). In many ways, the process starts with the fundamental purpose of HE, the quality of teaching and learning.

Studies have also shown that there is a strong relationship between student attainment on entry and outcomes (Johnes and Taylor, 1989; Smith and Naylor, 2001; Johnes and McNabb, 2004). Universities can, therefore, achieve high standards simply by restricting their intake to the highest-attaining five or ten percent of school-leavers. However, this is no longer possible. Universities in most countries are under financial pressure to admit as many students as possible as they are usually funded on the basis of the number of enrolments (Fallis, 2013). They are also under pressure to admit students from a wide range of disadvantaged backgrounds even though these are the students most likely not to complete their degrees (Crawford, 2014).

Since the quality of teaching and learning is a shared responsibility, it requires a collective approach among instructors, heads of department, college and institutional leaders and the national level government (Alnassar and Dow, 2013). Quality of teaching can be improved by recruiting highly-qualified and skilled academics who are open to further

training and utilise modern teaching methods. It can also be improved through effective faculty evaluation systems that provide meaningful feedback via student ratings and peer observations and are linked to academics' professional development.

Academics play a significant role in the teaching and learning of their students; therefore, one of the ways to achieve high quality is to recruit highly-qualified academics, who are open to continuous improvement. Furthermore, academics need to apply effective teaching and learning methodologies. In order to broaden their vision and skills, academics also need periodic exposure to other educational contexts. It is believed that attaining good quality knowledge and skills from countries recognised for developing good practices is a helpful strategy to accelerate the productivity and creativity of the workforce of a nation (Bukhari and Denman, 2013). This is particularly true of the KSA, where a large number of academics are sent abroad, especially to universities in the developed world to enhance their academic and professional skills (Mazi and Altbach, 2013). Previous research has indicated the benefits of such initiatives, both for the teachers involved and for their students. This aids in familiarising them with different classroom contexts and broadening the perspective to global level for those sent on overseas education and training programmes (Hamza, 2010). However, this should not be considered a way of simply copying other countries; rather, the strategy should be to use such experiences to understand one's own education system, with all its advantages and faults (Raffe, 2011). In addition, there may be resistance to applying such systems to a different cultural environment and the views of those involved may differ.

2.4.1 Resistance to Quality Initiatives

Resistance to quality initiatives has been observed on a frequent basis across different contexts. Academics have been seen to interpret the implementation of a quality management system as an attempt by higher management to impose accountability and

place them under greater surveillance, rather than as a genuine attempt to achieve improved quality of teaching and learning. Additionally, quality is also generally associated with bureaucracy and heavy documentation (Newton, 2002; Wang, 2014). Hence, academics tend to resist the implementation of quality initiatives because they are sceptical of the reasons underpinning them. It is argued that unless a shared understanding is reached among university management, university quality agencies, and academic staff about this much debated notion of quality, progress is unlikely to be attained (Anderson and Johnson, 2006).

A number of studies have recorded considerable resistance to quality initiatives. For instance, in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), Land and Rattray (2014) found that there was little interest in outcomes-oriented learning curricula and related methods of evaluation. This can be ascribed to a lack of awareness of staff members about international policy initiatives, such as the Bologna Process and The European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)⁶. Likewise, Albaqami (2015) found similar resistance to the implementation of quality management systems in the KSA, attributing to the lack of awareness of the benefit of improved quality, and a fear of change among academics. Such antagonism to the idea of enhanced quality means that outdated teaching methods remain the norm in Saudi universities, and opportunities to improve students' skills and abilities are lost (Al-Ghamdi and Tight, 2013). Studying the barriers to the adoption of new educational technology in Saudi universities, Colbran & Al-Ghreimil (2013) found that infrastructure deficiencies and failures, combined with software problems, the absence of training and ongoing support for academics, and the policy of blocking certain websites, posed principal obstacles to quality attainment. Moreover, in Alenezi's

⁶ 6 The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) were established in 2005 and are currently being reviewed. The ESG Part 1 applies to all higher education within Europe and provides advice on all aspects of QA (Eggins, 2014).

(2012) survey of e-learning adoption in two Saudi universities, factors relating to gender, age, and years of teaching experience operated to promote/deter adoption. Specifically, female academics were seen to be more favourable towards e-learning than males; individuals below 44 years of age were more positive towards it than those who were older, and academics with less than ten years' teaching experience were more prepared to engage with e-learning than those with more years of experience.

2.4.2 Evaluation

Effective evaluation systems provide feedback that is not only meaningful but also related to academics' professional development. Such an evaluation can comprise student ratings and teacher peer observations. Since quality achievement in HE requires the involvement of all stakeholders in the planning as well as implementation stages (Darandari and Cardew, 2013), students are fundamental stakeholders in HE. Therefore, understanding what students value is another important strategy to achieving teaching quality in HE (Ledden et al., 2011). Such understanding can only be gained if students have the chance to give their opinions, and in fact student feedback is now regularly solicited. However, it is known that this may not be entirely accurate and academics often dismiss or challenge what is said about them, if it is negative.

Student satisfaction is regularly analysed by HEIs. Whether this leads to grade inflation is a moot point with some studies suggesting it does (Zangenehzadeh, 1988; Greenwald, 1997; Krautmann and Sander, 1999; Anglin and Meng, 2000; Ewing, 2012) and others suggesting it does not (Bachan, 2015). In the KSA, the renewal of teaching contracts for international academics is tied exclusively to student satisfaction scores in order to prevent student complaints. Although there are no comparable analyses of Saudi student satisfaction scores and academic grades, the possibility always exists that the pressure of

student satisfaction may indeed persuade some academics seeking contract renewal to consider awarding higher grades.

Another evaluative strategy that has been used in HEIs to enhance the quality of teaching and learning is “peer observation”, which is a mechanism whereby academics evaluate one another. In the Australian context, Bell and Thomson (2016) found this was introduced by higher management in a research-intensive university in the interests of creating an atmosphere of collegiality and offering choice to academics in teaching methodologies. The acceptability of peer observation by the higher management themselves was also influenced by positive personal experience in the past and pressure from the organisation. However, in most Saudi universities, the only source of feedback regarding the effectiveness of academics is student evaluations, and these can be highly subjective and quite misleading. Furthermore, there is also no link between this student evaluation and professional evaluation programmes (Al-Ghamdi and Tight, 2013).

It was also found by Al-Ghamdi and Tight (2013) that the principal challenges to the establishment of effective appraisal systems in the KSA include 1) the incomplete appreciation of the evaluation process, a situation which is seen at all levels of the university hierarchy, 2) ingrained resistance by academics to the notion of evaluation, 3) the fact that evaluation results are not used for anything, 4) the use of untrained and unskilled evaluators who are not qualified to conduct such forms of assessment, 5) the absence of any guidance, objectives, performance targets, and standards and 6) the failure to inform academics of ways in which they can change their practice and perform better. Consequently, there is no clear methodology by which an accurate picture of an academic’s performance can be gained. Under these circumstances, academics naturally challenge the need for evaluation and perceive it merely as an irritant to be tolerated. Hence, it appears that the administration of the process, and the attitudes demonstrated

by academics seriously undermine the credibility of the evaluation process in Saudi HEIs (Al-Sharbainy, 2004). This may have changed over the past decade; therefore, it is an area that would benefit from further investigation.

In addition, the greater value accorded to research by the KSA Ministry detracts from the motivation to improve teaching. As the regulations stand, promotions from assistant professor to associate professor, and from associate professor to full professor are conditional, not upon solid appraisal of teaching performance, but rather upon completion of research for four years subsequent to the award of the terminal degree (CoHE, 1998). Hence, teaching ability has no bearing on career progression within Saudi HEIs and the current academic output evaluation system in the KSA for promotion focuses solely on research. Teaching-related improvement seems to be neglected, which can be a serious impediment to quality enhancement. However, this does not operate for non-Saudi academics, as these individuals are obliged to submit a yearly evaluation form, and it is this form upon the basis of which contracts are renewed. Surprisingly, there are no stipulated criteria for success in such evaluations; they are completely subjective, and hence, impressionistic. Normally, they do not produce any useful details upon which to base programmes for improvement, at either the individual or institutional levels, and consequently, they are of no value (Arreola 2007 cited in Smith and Abouammoh, 2013). Yet, if there is any chance for the overall performance of an HEI to improve, the data gathered from evaluation systems must be used to inform the type of professional development made available to academics (Arreola 2007 cited in Smith and Abouammoh, 2013).

As universities operate in a highly competitive international sector, with each wanting to attract the best students (Saltmarsh, 2011), there is reason to believe that improvement in standards is desired by all. In other words, they would put QA initiatives high on the

agenda in order to ensure they were in a good position in global league tables. However, competition does not appear to have much impact on student intake, as most students prefer universities that offer the courses they want or where they can be with their friends (Li and Mae, 2016). Furthermore, Alani et al., (2015) argue that too much competition could see universities become more aggressive in their student recruitment and thus discourage wider participation and a more diverse student body. KSA is still in the early stages of developing its knowledge economy and it is not yet known whether QA initiatives are seen as being as important to those involved in HE as perhaps they are in other parts of the world.

Having demonstrated the different strategies for quality achievement in HE, this next section considers the role of HoDs and how their selection and development influence quality achievement.

2.5 Heads of Department in HE

In the HE context, effective leadership at a department level is linked to improved quality of teaching and learning (Knight and Trowler, 2000). This suggests that HoDs play a “multi-dimensional” (Sotirakou 2004, p.350) and critical role in a department as they work with different parties of unequal authoritarian power, i.e. academic staff and senior management of the university (Ketteridge et al, 2002). They translate and promote the objectives of their university, also striving to ensure the smooth running of academics’ work in a department (Jones, 2011), while acting as a bedrock for training future academic leaders (Bolden et al., 2008b).

According to Smith (2007), university HoDs are vital for two reasons. On the one hand, they serve their universities academically through teaching and research, and on the other, they represent and lead their staff. Therefore, HoDs act as an interface between the senior leadership of the university and the leadership of specific academic disciplines, while also being a "buffer" between senior leadership and academics (Gleeson and Shain, 1999). HoDs are increasingly expected to provide a high level of management and leadership in their departments in order to respond to the very complex, competitive and changing environment of the HE sector (London, 2011). In fact, a study by Hellowell and Hancock (2001) found a certain duality and vagueness in academic leaders in that they appear to be neither purely leaders nor purely managers. Such role duality generates conflict and hence tensions for HoDs (Saunders and Sin, 2015). This is unfortunate, given the contribution expected of middle leadership in academic institutions in relation to quality enhancement.

In the UK, Preston and Price (2012) conducted a qualitative study of 18 participants from various faculties of a chartered university⁷ and found that HoDs were more involved in day-to-day administration than in contributing to strategic decisions. Subsequently, the participants perceived their roles as involving less authority and more responsibilities. In contrast, a much larger UK study by Bolden et al (2008) found the HoDs' role to be an attractive one because it brings more authority and control of budgetary resources. The findings by Bolden et al. (2008b) seem to be more generalisable and rigorous as they surveyed 12 universities across UK, whereas Preston and Price (2012) investigated only one specific university.

The above observations are not necessarily confined to the UK context, as empirical evidence from developing countries paints a similar picture. For example, Nguyen (2013) conducted research into the role of HoDs in academic management and interviewed 24 HoDs at a newly-established Vietnamese university. In Vietnam and in the KSA, both developing countries, there is strict government control over HEIs with regard to curricula, student quotas and all finances. Not surprisingly, Nguyen (2013) discovered that HoDs' main responsibilities were to manage programmes, academics and logistic/facilities, whereas in other areas such as strategic and financial management, they played a minimal role. The study recommended increasing HoDs' authority and giving them responsibility for improving the overall performance of the university as HoDs have a better understanding of the needs of the departments they manage than decision-makers further up the hierarchy.

HoDs can demonstrate effective leadership while performing the institutional, academic, and administrative functions embedded in their role (Middlehurst and Elton, 1992). The institutional function concerns external issues and policies such as the connection

⁷*Chartered universities* are older research-led universities, while *Statutory universities* are newer, teaching-led institutions.

between the institution and industry, whereas the academic function is more focused on promoting teaching, research, and interdisciplinary collaborative activities across the institution. Finally, the administrative function is about providing support to the academics by establishing a climate that attracts and retains qualified staff (Juhl and Christensen, 2008). In UK universities, Sotirakou (2004) identified a wide range of tasks that were expected of HoDs. These included showing entrepreneurial skills at the same time as discharging a number of managerial functions including preparing annual, departmental, and strategic plans. In addition to undertaking quality control procedures and academics appraisal, HoDs are charged with managing financial resources, generating external funding, developing and marketing new programmes, developing partnerships with other universities, academics and government, and performing general administrative duties. Moreover, HoDs need to keep abreast of their subjects and continue to teach and undertake research. This list of duties suggests that HoDs have the potential, if not the time, to influence quality achievement through managing the time and talents of academics, as well as through their own teaching and research.

Research on HoD by Floyd and Dimmock (2011), who investigated the experiences of 17 HoDs in post-1992 UK universities, has identified three types of academic leaders, namely Jugglers, Copers, and Strugglers. These are further outlined as follows;

- Jugglers are HoDs who juggle multiple identities and workloads at the same time. They seem happy with their role and aspire to continue. They are individuals who handle multiple tasks simultaneously as they endeavour to realise their ambitions and potential within the department/institution.
- Copers are HoDs who accept their workloads, but experience identity conflicts. They are “just” coping with the situation. This suggests that they may not

continue their role in the future, especially as literature suggests they may not be “enjoying” the aspects of their role.

- Strugglers are HoDs who face difficulties in balancing and managing their multiple identities and workloads. This group has more chances of leaving their headship role in the future, as they find it difficult to come to terms with the responsibilities placed upon their shoulders within the capacities of their role.

This classification suggests that different HoDs are likely to have different developmental needs. Moreover, the pressures placed on HoDs, as identified by Nguyen (2013), vary from department to department, with such differences arising from the nature of the subject, from the relative positioning of the department within the university (Johnson, 2002) or from external pressure. For example, given the demands of modern labour market, it is commonly observed that Business and Engineering departments usually have a higher status than Humanities.

Furthermore, the review of literature identified certain characteristics as essential to HoDs in the effective performance of their roles. Bryman (2007) conducted a comprehensive literature review and extracted thirteen features considered crucial for effective departmental leaders in HEIs. All thirteen aspects presented in Table 3 are commonly found in the leadership literature at large.

Table 3: Main Leadership Behaviour Associated with Leadership Effectiveness at Departmental Level

NO.	Characteristic
1	Clear sense of direction/strategic vision
2	Preparing department arrangements to facilitate the direction set
3	Being considerate
4	Treating academic staff fairly and with integrity
5	Being trustworthy and having personal integrity
6	Allowing the opportunity to participate in key decisions/encouraging open communication
7	Communicating well about the direction the department is going
8	Acting as a role model/having credibility
9	Creating a positive/collegial work atmosphere in the department
10	Advancing the department's cause with respect to constituencies internal and external to the university and being proactive in doing so
11	Providing feedback on performance
12	Providing resources for and adjusting workloads to stimulate scholarship and research
13	Making academic appointments that enhance department's reputation

Source: Bryman (2007, p.697)

2.5.1 Factors Influencing the Role of HoDs

Clearly, such a complex role as that just described can be positively and negatively affected by different factors, and it is important to understand these in order to improve quality. It should be noted that researchers typically tend to focus on obstacles to effective HoD performance rather than facilitators, which represents a gap in the literature. While the identification of barriers can demonstrate where action is needed, it is also valuable to identify facilitators as these tend to go unnoticed and, consequently, opportunities to reward good practice and learn from success are missed.

One of the key facilitators of the HoD role relates to placing the most suitably qualified individual in the position. This requires the establishment of an effective selection process, in which candidates possessing the right leadership characteristics, meeting the criteria of both the department and the university and exhibiting the highest commitment levels and a clear vision are encouraged to apply, and the best one is appointed (Bryman, 2007). In addition to having the right skills, the continuous updating of such a repertoire is required through professional development (Jones, 2011).

Other significant factors in relation to meeting departmental goals include shared vision and collaboration amongst different stakeholders working in a given HEI (Juhl and Christensen, 2008) and effective teamwork among staff in a department (Bolden et al., 2008a). Similarly, Harrison and Brodeth (1999) found that communication is important for promoting collegiality. Effective communication can contribute to more active staff-engagement in the decision-making process, which encourages HoDs to discuss the various challenges confronting the departmental members, while putting forward action plans for the department. Extending the contribution and involvement of team members is often associated with distributed leadership models, and these strategies can bring benefits both to the organisation and to individual staff members, as they encourage the improvement and maximisation of the potential for effective leadership at all levels (Sackney et al., 2000). Consequently, task delegation is a useful facilitator as it distributes power and responsibilities and develops a sense of ownership to the other departmental staff (Bolden et al., 2009).

The development of such a participatory approach requires support from senior management (Juhl and Christensen, 2008; Jones, 2011; Albaqami, 2015), and it is thus paramount to gain the commitment of higher management, such as the Dean or Rector of the university, to ensure that the departmental goals can be effectively achieved (Juhl

and Christensen, 2008). This observation is confirmed by Jones (2011) who not only recommends seeking adequate support from different stakeholders, such as the Human Resource Department, Deans and the like, but also mentoring from experienced and successful HoDs, ex-HoDs and other senior academics within the department. Moreover, Albaqami (2015) has found that senior leadership and management support also play a critical role in quality implementation because when more senior leaders in the university clarify the roles and tasks, middle level leaders can better guide and motivate their followers (Brown and Moshavi, 2002).

An appropriate reward structure, which gives a satisfactory financial incentive for staff members based on positive performance levels, is also identified as a fundamental facilitating factor in the effort to achieve excellence, not only in a department but also at the university level (Jones, 2011; Kok and McDonald, 2015). However, Juhl and Christensen (2008) argue that financial rewards feature low on the list of priorities for academics, and that numerous other factors play a more important role in facilitating the HoD jobs. These include factors such as the opportunities for research and personal and professional development and the degree of academic freedom available within the HEI environment.

2.5.1.1 Barriers

Without a doubt, HoDs face a range of barriers in exercising their roles. A significant one relates to the lack of authority of HoDs over academics (Hellawell and Hancock, 2001; Deem, 2004; Preston and Price, 2012; Saunders and Sin, 2015). It is noteworthy that managing academics is considered a delicate task (Preston and Price, 2012) and is widely deemed a complicated activity, which has been referred to as “herding cats” (Brown and Moshavi, 2002; Deem, 2010). Smith (2007) recognises that such lack of authority can prevent HoDs from addressing issues around under-performance, from

retaining high-performing academics, and from dealing effectively with troublesome cases if needed. In the UK context, for example, HoDs struggle to manage academics who hold permanent contracts, as they have limited power, especially when trying to discipline under-performing full-time academics (Hellowell and Hancock, 2001). Even though the terms regarding tenure in the UK have changed and now offer less security for academic staff, it remains exceedingly difficult to dismiss individuals except in cases of extreme misconduct (Hellowell and Hancock, 2001). Likewise, in Denmark, Juhl and Christensen (2008) have found that tenure can be life-long, making it very difficult for university management to dismiss academic staff. This makes it difficult for HoDs to implement changes to university strategies as they have limited authority to control their departments and to ensure that they are staffed with the best-performing people.

This finding seems to be relevant to the Saudi context because native Saudis are employed on permanent contracts, whereas non-Saudi HE academics receive temporary contracts for pre-determined periods of time (Rugh, 2002; Mazawi, 2005). Despite comprising a relatively large proportion (about 30%) of the teaching workforce, individuals of non-Saudi origin struggle to renew their contracts. This has been perceived as a positive for the institution, as it means that the core staff can easily be exchanged in the light of the HoDs' strategic implementation, thus overcoming one of the many barriers to change. However, it also leads to a high turnover of academic staff, which obstructs the overall quality implementation process. Meanwhile, Saudi nationals are being directly appointed into contracts with tenure (lifelong appointments), with no guarantee that they will be capable of performing effectively in that position (Mazawi, 2005). Under these circumstances, the regulations preventing such Saudi academics from being dismissed regardless of their performance, are a genuine problem.

Government intervention also causes a difficulty in respect of employment, as the Ministry of Employment must approve the creation of any new position, promotion, and salary, and such approval is granted only if the rules stipulated by the Supreme Council of Higher Education (SCHE) are followed. This means that universities are not completely in control of the recruitment and selection of academics and are prevented from formulating their own academic staffing policies. The involvement of the Ministry of Employment thus reduces the independence of universities and may provide them with academics who are not suitable for the position and who cannot be dismissed (Alkhazim, 2003).

The lack of power of HoDs is also seen in the context of decision-making at the institutional level. These institutional level decisions inevitably affect operations within their departments, but HoDs are excluded from decision-making, thereby leading to low morale and a feeling of isolation (Sotirakou, 2004; Bolden et al., 2014). This suggests that the involvement of HoDs at the strategic level of their institution is minimal, and that major decisions are made by senior leaders and HoDs are expected to implement them at a departmental level. This hierarchical approach is exactly mirrored in the Saudi HE sector. Senior leaders make the decisions, and middle managers (such as HoDs) put them into action (Onsman, 2010).

In addition to their limited input into important decisions, as found in the Scottish context by Saunders and Sin (2015), some HoDs have inadequate budgetary control and are, therefore, insufficiently empowered to effectively exercise their managerial role. These researchers discovered that the financial accounts are controlled by the dean or higher leadership in the institution. This lack of administrative and financial autonomy has detrimental effects on the running of a department, not least because the bureaucracy involved in seeking permissions delays decision-making, and hence the implementation

of new initiatives. In the Saudi context, for instance, the centralisation of finances and the bureaucracy associated with this delay the implementation of quality-related projects (Albaqami, 2015). The delays are especially related to budget approvals for the development or purchase of equipment to facilitate teaching and learning.

Furthermore, the absence of clarity in job descriptions, and the consequent heavy workload facing HoDs as they take on both leadership and managerial responsibilities test their stamina, thereby leading to a negative effect on their performance. For instance, a comprehensive study by Kok and McDonald (2015) using mixed methods to collect data from over 600 respondents across 50 different academic departments in five UK universities discovered that a lack of clarity over job responsibilities is associated with weak HoD performance. This has a negative impact on the other members of the team because high performing HoDs were observed to be more supportive of their staff by providing them with clear direction and facilitating a relationship of trust.

HoDs in Kok and McDonald's (2015) study within the UK complained about the bureaucracy e.g. completing paperwork, citing this as very time-consuming. Undoubtedly, completing administrative tasks and institutional bureaucracy are the main obstacles to the effective discharge of HoDs' leadership role. Indeed, HoDs find it difficult to manage the key aspects of their job descriptions, i.e., research and teaching, as the administrative tasks they are expected to attend to are very time-consuming (Smith, 2002).

Other activities have been identified as contributing to the long working hours of HoDs, such as, for example, dealing with personnel issues, attending meetings, engaging in research and publication (in chartered universities), and teaching and student issues (in statutory universities) (Deem, 2000; Smith, 2005, 2007). Ironically, these very tasks which detract from HoDs' efforts to maintain quality teaching and research in their

departments are escalated when an HEI embarks upon a QA implementation process (Wang, 2014). Another identified challenge is collegiality, which seems to be the preferred model of decision-making, although exhibited to a higher degree in UK chartered universities than in statutory ones, which prefer a more managerial mode of decision-making (Smith, 2005; Warner and Palfreyman, 2000, p.88). According to Hellawell and Hancock (2001), collegiality is an aspect that hinders the decision-making process within departments.

Resistance to change was considered a key barrier, especially as colleagues were often seen to resist the added responsibilities despite them being within their fields. Not only this, but in order for the final decisions reached to be implemented effectively, lengthy consultations in advance are also seen to be required (Hellawell and Hancock, 2001). This seems to be similar to what occurs in the KSA context where the decisions should be taken by the College or Departmental Council and documented in the form of recommendations, and then submitted to the University Council for final approval (Al-Eisa and Smith, 2013). This process in itself is lengthy since Departmental Council meetings require half or more of all academics to attend, and this is not always easy to arrange, thereby delaying the implementation of a decision and prolonging continued under-performance.

In view of the obstacles discussed above, it is essential for senior university leaders to provide HoDs with sufficient training and development to ensure that they can discharge their role professionally and can meet the university's expectations. However, although the role of HoDs is associated with a wide range of leadership and managerial responsibilities, there are limited opportunities to develop HoDs so that they can fulfil the tasks demanded by their new role. Therefore, the absence of appropriate training is a persistent theme in the literature (Bryman, 2007; Smith, 2007; Bolden, Petrov and

Gosling, 2008a; Meek et al., 2010; Preston and Price, 2012; Saunders and Sin, 2015; Floyd, 2016). Limited professional development is considered the biggest dilemma for HoDs, especially for those who lack previous managerial experience, a deficiency which may negatively affect their performance in the early stages (Juhl and Christensen, 2008; Jones, 2011). Furthermore, it has been identified that HoDs must have a credible academic background, which is not always connected with their managerial experience (Juhl and Christensen, 2008). The selection procedure relating to the appointment of HoDs is discussed in the next section.

2.5.2 Selection of HoDs

The mechanics of selection are important since they determine those who will be excluded and those who will be included in the process. Consequently, they should be formally instituted, as informal means of selection may overlook some individuals with high capabilities. This was reported by Deem (2000) in her large-scale UK study, in which 135 manager-academics (including HoDs) and 29 senior administrators (in 12 pre- and post-1992 HEIs) were interviewed. It has been observed that different selection systems exist in different countries with respect to the appointment of HoDs in HE; for example, Adamson and Brown (2012) found a considerable difference in the hierarchical power structure between Asian and Western universities. They concluded that within Asian institutions, university leadership positions are attained on the basis of seniority, unlike in Western institutions where these positions are filled on the basis of egalitarian principles. Similarly, Russia has a comparable level of centralisation of political and governmental power to Saudi HE, with HoDs being selected by their senior colleagues (Mercer and Pogolian, 2013) and this is dependent on the progress made in their junior level role.

These findings have relevance for the situation in the KSA, wherein there is also a centralised and hierarchical power structure in universities. KSA has respect for elders, but a paradox of the system in the universities is that the HoDs are relatively junior and cannot automatically claim the respect shown to elders. This may undermine the authority of these younger HoDs, especially when they are in the position to supervise older academics.

In the UK, over the last three decades, the selection processes and criteria have been professionalised, at least in post-1992⁸ UK universities (Deem, 2000). This has made the HoD's role more appealing and has resulted in enhanced interest and open competition. Smith (2007) further elaborated that in the UK's statutory universities, the selection of HoDs was made through external advertising, internal promotion, and appointment by senior university management. Contrastingly, an informal process was noted in pre-1992 universities, during which appropriate individuals were identified as being suitable for the role or a large number of people gave approval to one person through a democratic voting approach (Deem, 2000). Furthermore, Smith (2007) found that in chartered universities, HoDs were elected by their departmental colleagues and served a fixed term of three years. The less formalised model in the chartered universities seems to run the risk of excluding eligible staff, especially females (Deem, 2000). Moreover, the increased professionalisation of the HoD's role seen in the UK is not found in many other geographical contexts. For example, a qualitative study in the Turkish HE context involved interviews with 14 HoDs on this subject, and identified that the HoDs' role is not professionalised and is still perceived negatively (Dimici et al., 2016).

It is argued that a selection process lacking criteria may hinder the achievement of effective leadership at the departmental level (Wolverton et al., 2005). For instance, an

⁸In 1992, some polytechnics and other educational institutions were given university status.

internally-selected individual may have the advantage of being familiar with the realities of the department but may not be effective in disciplining his/her colleagues. However, if an externally-selected individual is appointed, s/he may not have adequate knowledge of the culture and context of a department and/or university or an understanding of the intricacies of how work is conducted in that department. Thus, it is crucial when selecting a suitable individual for the role of HoD to ensure that the individual appointed can lead and manage the department from the outset and not simply hope that s/he will settle into the role and be able to perform at some point. Moreover, the future career decisions made by HoDs are based on the types of experience they bring to the HoD role when taking up the role (Floyd and Dimmock, 2011) and the identities they assume. Often their academic identity is subsumed by their workload.

It is also noted that the system for appointing HoDs is linked to where their loyalties lie (Juhl and Christensen, 2008). For example, if an HoD is nominated by academics in that department, s/he is more likely to be loyal to them and less loyal to the university administration. In this case, academics have more power. Contrastingly, if the HoD is appointed by the higher management of that university, then s/he is likely to work to satisfy the interests of higher management rather than those of the academics. This indicates the importance of the backgrounds, previous experiences and loyalties of the individual selected for the HoD role. That said, Saunders and Sin (2015) in their qualitative study involving 100 managers in Scottish HEIs, found that the promotion of staff with good academic standing both in research and teaching was no indication that those academics would have the ability to discharge the management tasks associated with the role of HoD. Consequently, the issue of selection criteria must be addressed, and this is discussed, next.

2.5.2.1 Appropriate Selection Criteria

Traditionally, research excellence was the main criterion for the selection of HoDs in the UK. However, a number of criteria for the appointment of new academic leaders have been introduced including credibility, capability, character, and career tactics (Bolden et al., 2008a). These are explicit criteria that are used by selection panels when making decisions about candidates. Furthermore, a UK study recommended that a typical HoD should possess qualities ranging from an analytical mind and pragmatism to knowledge of stakeholders and effective inter-personal skills (Blackmore and Blackwell, 2006). HoDs need to respond innovatively to the constant developments and changes in their institutions, along with the challenges posed by government policies and funding provision. As such, leadership traits are significant for attaining the objectives of both the university (Parrish, 2015), and the department (Jones, 2011). These characteristics comprise having a clear vision, which indicates an ability to facilitate change while acquiring academics consensus (Graham and Benoit, 2004; Bland et al., 2005), and acting as a role model with credibility (Van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003; Karakhanyan et al., 2012).

According to (Wolverton et al., 2005), there are a number of characteristics that contribute to the effectiveness of the HoDs, which include excellent interpersonal skills, managing difficult to handle individuals, the ability to co-operate, and functioning as a mediator between academics and senior managers. This view is supported by Sotirakou (2004) who has established that successful heads maintain positive collegial cultures within their institution and department. Moreover, it is also suggested that recruitment and professional development practices for HoDs need to focus on emotional intelligence (Parrish, 2015).

While recruiting HoDs, the higher management must also consider their potential leadership qualities. Existing literature indicates that there are certain commonalities in the research conducted on leadership qualities in the UK and elsewhere. For example, Trocchia and Andrus (2003), used an internet survey involving 247 full-time marketing staff and 43 department heads at 167 US Business Schools, a decentralised system similar to the UK but in contrast with KSA. This study found that the top five abilities for effective leadership within the marketing department included evaluating academics fairly, treating them with respect, representing the department to central administration effectively, having the capacity take a principled stand when necessary and to display enthusiasm for the department. Similarly, a study conducted in Iran by Arbabisarjou et al. (2016) on “managerial competencies for HoDs” identified the following nine competencies: planning, leadership, decision-making, teamwork, ICT, controlling, human resource management, organising, and communication. Although at first glance, the two sets of features seem to be different, both refer to leadership characteristics in that the first list presents personal attributes of a leader underpinning professional behaviours while the latter focuses on professional skills necessary for taking a leading role.

It can thus be inferred that the skills required for an effective department head are all-encompassing and may vary, given the fact that different departments within a university have their own functions and priorities. Indeed, Trocchia and Andrus (2003) observed that what is seen as successful in one department may not be so effective in another where the subject is different. What can be said with confidence, however, is that from the comprehensive lists of effective leadership competencies discussed above, the expected qualities of HoDs are complex and multi-layered. This may have a significant impact on the motivation of any potential HoD.

2.5.2.2 Motivation to become an HoD

In recent years, there has been a growing debate regarding the issue of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to take up the role of a HoD. It is found that recruitment of academics for HoD positions in HEIs is becoming a challenge (Bolden et al., 2008a). The reasons for this include the importance of finding a suitable person for the role, the requirement of relevant experience in the field, the danger of the role negatively affecting research work and publications (as perceived by potential candidates), and unfavourable organisational systems and processes (Smith 2007; Bolden et al. 2008a).

In the pre-1992 UK universities, several barriers were seen to deter prospective HoDs, comprising limited interest in leadership, inadequate development and preparation for the role, rotational nature of the role, limited recognition and few incentives (Smith, 2007; Bolden et al. 2008a). Moreover, the burden associated with the role were perceived to exceed the rewards (Floyd, 2012). Clearly, HoDs are expected to take on many administrative tasks, which affect their core academic responsibilities, namely teaching and research. This results in a decreased contribution to the very activities for which they joined academia (Floyd, 2012). This is consistent with the view of Sotirakou (2004), who observes that there is a potential for conflict between the managerial responsibilities associated with the role of HoD, and HoDs' individual academic work. It seems that senior leadership roles are more attractive than middle level ones because they are considered easier to perform since there are fewer conflicts of interest, fewer clashes with research activity, larger budgets to control, and a bigger team of administrators to do some of the low-level work.

Despite the challenges mentioned above, a number of attractions in accepting formal leadership in HE have been highlighted (Bolden et al., 2008a). Some academic leaders had come to see academic leadership as a desirable career after their term in office, and

having settled into the role, they found it enjoyable and rewarding. Moreover, unlike the responses from the pre-1992 UK universities, some of those from the post-1992 UK universities suggest that participants were actually keen to pursue a role in management as a way to reduce their responsibilities for teaching and research (Deem, 2000). Another reason for choosing to assume the role of HoD was the passion shown by leaders to speak on behalf of their colleagues and ensure that their opinions are conveyed to higher management (Smith 2005). These leaders may also become very protective of their staff in order to serve their interests, seeking to support them and help them develop (Floyd, 2012). Bryman (2007) found that two vital aspects of the HoDs' role included securing resources for their departments and developing their staff.

Another major reason for people to become HoDs in the UK is the desire to achieve a feeling of empowerment and to bring change to the structure and working of the department (Hellowell and Hancock, 2001). Johnson (2002) also identified both positive and negative reasons for accepting the role of HoDs. Although some of the HoDs took on the role reluctantly because other academics in a department were not ready for it, more positive reasons included curiosity, experiencing a new challenge and, for some, feeling better placed than others to take up the role. Although the role of an HoD is replete with challenges, it seems there are good reasons for some to assume the position. Nevertheless, it is clear that ongoing development of HoD skills is likely to be a priority, as the next section elaborates.

2.5.2.3 Succession Planning and HoDs' Tenure

Although academic departments are responsible for most of the college and institutional work, a large number of universities fail to take into consideration the preparation of HoDs or any succession planning procedures for the role (Deem, 2000; Wolverton, Ackerman and Holt, 2005; Juhl and Christensen, 2008). HoDs are not always selected on

the basis of whether they show evidence of being good leaders and communicators (Hickson and Stacks, 1992) or have strong managerial experience, but rather on being excellent academics (Bryman, 2007; Parrish, 2015) or sometimes because the selection process is based on patronage, prejudice or nepotism (Bolden et al., 2014). Thus, universities are advised to appoint HoDs with the relevant leadership skills or offer training to those lacking such characteristics (Brown and Moshavi, 2002). Failure to do so may have negative repercussions for the department and the university as a whole. It is necessary, therefore, to have an eye to the future when appointing HoDs, and to envisage how they can develop to become even more effective leaders.

Succession planning is integral to this need to consider the future, and stands as an important element that needs to be taken into account in the selection process of HoDs. The existing literature suggests that incoming HoDs need time to adjust and to fully appreciate and meet the expectations of the new role (Wolverton et al., 2005; Berdrow, 2010). It is thus proposed that a policy of shadowing a departmental head for one year and assuming certain responsibilities prior to progressing into the actual role as a HoD is a sensible one. According to Wolverton et al. (2005), this approach has been successfully adopted in the University of Nevada Las Vegas, USA. It allows an HoD elect to explore whether s/he is capable of undertaking the role and to make a smooth transition from the shadowing year to the time when the new position is actually assumed. This process also means that an effective leader could be in the making at the university as well as at a departmental level. Indeed, it can be viewed as an executive training programme. Formal training courses prior to appointment received a more mixed reaction, with some participants claiming it was not possible to learn to become a leader/manager as a result of just following a course, while others deemed it possible (Preston and Price, 2012). All agreed, however, that once in post, the incumbents would learn from experience as they are involved in recurrent and repetitive practices in the department.

Regarding HoDs' tenure, in the UK for example, most management posts in the pre-1992 universities were offered on a temporary basis, as opposed to in the post-1992 sector, wherein posts were overwhelmingly offered on permanent contracts (Deem, 2000). Deem (2000) explained the complex nature of both types of contract by referring to their various advantages and disadvantages. Regarding the permanent posts, the major benefit lies in the proper remuneration offered by the profession. Also, leaders can develop their skills and knowledge without having to worry about pursuing a parallel career in research. Nevertheless, they are not often considered by other academics to have much accountability. In addition, it is possible that permanent managers may eventually become ineffective if they have no desire to seek higher posts.

In contrast, a key benefit of temporary posts is flexibility, which enables academics to try out the management role and decide whether to remain in it if they decide the position is suitable for them or to return after a short period to their purely academic responsibilities. While seen by colleagues as having more accountability to staff, temporary managers may still experience a steep learning curve and when the post is offered to another colleague, the managerial development experienced by the previous HoD is lost to the institution. However, such temporary contracts do enable leaders to assume management roles without endangering their academic careers, and the knowledge that the contract is not forever can counter initial indecisiveness by good candidates (Deem, 2000). It seems that there are increasing concerns in many institutions about the lack of candidates applying for HoD positions. In view of this, the process has shifted to appointing leaders rather than electing them, and to a permanent position from a fixed-term, taking into account the financial and other incentives for those offered permanent contracts (Bolden et al., 2014). It is observed that there is a paucity of literature specifically focusing on HoDs' tenure and succession planning in the HE sector.

2.5.3 Professional Development

Leadership development is a contested concept (Carroll and Nicholson, 2014). Some view it as a social process intended to increase inter-personal skills in order to win the trust, respect and commitment of others (Day, 2001). Others consider it to be a more individualistic process, which focuses on developing individual leadership capabilities without emphasising development and change in the surroundings. The individualistic view of leadership development is rejected on the basis of its inability to secure deeper changes in an organisation (Dopson et al., 2016). In this regard, Bolden and Gosling (2006) note that the competency framework⁹ has a tendency to strengthen individualistic practices of leadership, which may produce a gap between the leaders and the environment in which they work, thereby producing exclusive and individualistic types of leaders. Therefore, leadership development cannot have the potential to enhance organisational performance if other factors such as organisational culture and the availability of trained team members are lacking (Burgoyne et al., 2009).

This implies that there is a need to concentrate on the development of collective leadership rather than on individual leaders, and that leadership development should be part of the overall organisational and management development strategy in universities, which clearly emphasises the post-transformational leadership approach. A post-transformational leadership is one wherein the leader also becomes a follower and a more collaborative approach is taken; all staff work together and roles are allocated to the best person to carry out the task (West et al., 2000). This is in contrast to transformational leadership, wherein a leader is said to inspire others to make changes, but the focus is on the dynamism of the leader in achieving this, by having others to follow them. Furthermore, it is imperative to note that there is a difference between the

⁹A list of professional attributes and behaviours applicable to a job, a task or a position

development of a leader and leadership. The former is concerned with the individual, whereas leadership development stresses the promotion of an authentic and trusting relationship between leaders and their followers (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). Furthermore, leadership development is not a stand-alone practice but an ongoing process rooted in human capital training principles, alongside the establishment of open, trusting relationships. Training, hence, enables the development of new skills, and the improvement of existing ones, thereby allowing HoDs to further implement their role in a more effective manner.

2.5.3.1 Professional Development Opportunities for HoDs

A review of the existing literature by Anderson and Johnson (2006) identified that professional development opportunities for HoDs in the HE sector are patchy (Floyd, 2016) and that HoDs rely mainly on learning whilst on the job. In Deem's (2000) study, it emerged that although only one-third of the participants had received formal training, the majority of whom had been involved in various informal learning environments, including the process of identifying and seeking out more experienced colleagues. The findings further suggested that participants strove to interact on an informal basis to facilitate exchanges of information and experiences with senior colleagues. Furthermore, it was evident that individuals sought capabilities, experience, and support from within their disciplines, both internally and externally to their HEI, in the interest of supporting their managerial roles. However, the study did report that informal learning was not well supported. Moreover, there were feelings among the participants that they did not receive sufficient feedback relating to their performance in their managerial role.

This has also been noted in a study conducted by Johnson (2002) as part of the Deem (2000) Economic and Social Research Council grant (ESRC). The study found that the majority of HoDs had received minimal training and that they perceived the training they

had received as inadequate. In addition, the research also identified that HoDs' learning occurred not just through engagement in practice but also through their interaction on a social level. It was recommended that opportunities for critical self-reflection, peer feedback, and sharing of experiences needed to be promoted. Another study undertaken in Russia also found that HoDs lacked formal training prior to assuming their roles, although once performing the role, they did in fact receive support and attend formal courses (Mercer and Pogosian, 2012). These various shortcomings aside, it does appear that some initiatives have been implemented to formalise HoD training in certain contexts. For example, a study conducted by Bolden et al. (2008a), found a more established system of leadership development in the UK since specific and needs-based leadership courses are offered at all levels. Moreover, that study identified leadership as an ongoing process rather than a stand-alone developmental approach, in recognition of the dynamism of the HE sector and the knowledge that continuous professional development can equip leaders to respond to environmental changes swiftly.

Additionally, the researchers found that within UK HE, there is more focus on individual level leadership development, evidenced through mentoring, coaching, developing qualifications and job shadowing (Bolden et al., 2008a). Similarly, Burgoyne et al. (2009) found that the UK HEIs had achieved notable progress with regard to leadership development, which is accorded priority by policy-makers and senior management in the HE sector. This study confirmed the use of role shadowing, mentoring, pre-selection and in-service training in leadership development in HE. It also found that most universities had updated their strategy on leadership development. Often, the responsibility for developing leadership lays with the Human Resources Department, suggesting that leadership development is becoming more aligned with institutional strategies and organisational development programmes. However, it is also

acknowledged that in the UK a large proportion of academic middle managers, such as HoDs, need more intensive support to develop effective leadership skills (Floyd, 2016).

Contrastingly, although a focus on individualised development still remains in the UK, Inman (2009) in her investigation of how 18 middle leaders from six chartered universities in England learnt to lead, found a persistent lack of formalised opportunities for professional development. In other words, the leaders learned professional skills such as managing budgets and managing human resources whilst on the job. Inman (2009) proposed several strategies to provide professional development support to middle leaders, which included the establishment of a formal mentoring system that not only encourages network building but also provides guided critical reflection in practice. It was also highlighted that context-specific courses and opportunities to meet other people in the same role would be useful for developing leadership skills. Other studies have also reported that HoDs require training to help them adopt to the range of personal and professional identities required of the post and have also identified the lack of both formal and informal management training, and moral and social support strategies to deal with difficult situations (Floyd and Dimmock, 2011; Preston and Price, 2012). However, it is notable that although the findings were of interest and shed light on different perspectives, due to the sample size in these studies being relatively small, the generalisability of the findings to a wider population is questionable.

2.5.3.2 Timing and Content of Training

The significance of professional development for HoDs is clear, but the associated issue of when that development should begin is also important, since the timing of such input may have a substantial impact upon their performance in the role. In the studies of both Bolden et. al. (2008a) and Inman (2009), it was confirmed that HoDs wished they could have received training before they assumed their positions. Inman (2009) identified a

need for training on specific topics such as the management of human resources instead of generic leadership training. Preston and Price (2012) reported the need for the development of inter-personal skills and training in financial management. Deem et al. (2007) stated that all such training should be relevant and supportive to the HoD role. These researchers specifically found that the HoD's role as an entrepreneurial agent of change should be considered and training in the facilitation of cultural dynamics and managing performance and risk should be included. In the USA, Aziz et al. (2005) found that training related to budgeting, funding, staff, and legal matters was considered necessary by their participant HoDs who came from a public sector university in Ohio.

Evidence from developing countries has also identified important areas where training for HoDs is required. For example, Nguyen (2012) analysed available documentation in order to identify HoDs' training needs; the situation was found to be critical in as much as there was an urgent need to clarify the role of HoDs, to improve their English language proficiency, to develop their communication skills, to provide "general" management skills including those involved in project planning, and to develop skills related to research methods. This contrasts with the studies discussed above wherein researchers have identified "specific" training needs to perform the role of an HoD. From the above discussion, it is apparent that various approaches to the professional development of HoDs are in existence. Knight and Trowler (2001) have produced their own synthesis of knowledge types required by HoDs to perform their role effectively, and the seven types identified are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Types of Knowledge Associated with Leadership Development at Departmental Level

No.	Type of knowledge	Description
1	Control knowledge	A kind of self-awareness obtained through reflective practice
2	Knowledge of people	Inter-personal skills and emotional intelligence
3	Knowledge of educational practice	Such as the best ways of teaching and learning
4	Conceptual knowledge	Knowledge about management and leadership concepts
5	Process knowledge	Including knowledge of various processes involved in leadership and management
6	Situational knowledge	The knowledge of the existing conditions of the staff and their impact on the future
7	Tacit knowledge	Combines the other six forms of knowledge to help the leader develop his/her practice

Source: Knight and Trowler (2001)

These seven forms of knowledge provide a comprehensive framework for determining, designing, and delivering leadership development courses and support for HoDs in HE. However, given the fact that each HEI and academic department operates in a different context and thus has distinctive training needs, it also seems a challenge to systematically organise and deliver training on these forms of knowledge. Moreover, knowledge is only one of the attributes required by leaders; other elements like attitude, behaviour, values and principles play a role in leadership.

Moreover, it is also found that emotions play a role in the decision-making process in the HE sector (Bolton and English, 2010), and that the training of university middle leaders should acknowledge this. This idea is borne out by Australian research conducted by Parrish (2015), which used semi-structured interviews with HoDs to investigate the place of emotional intelligence in effective leadership. The study conducted pre- and post-leadership development intervention data from departmental and faculty level heads.

Similarly to Knight and Trowler (2001) (see Table 4), Parrish (2015) found that emotional intelligence traits such as empathy, inspiring and guiding others, and responsible self-management are specifically relevant to the HoD role. Recommendations to focus on the development of such skills are in parallel with HoDs' own requests for training in interpersonal skills to better prepare them for their role.

The need to integrate leadership development training with the strategic goals of HEIs and to establish formal mechanisms to evaluate the impact of leadership training on performance in organisations have been emphasised in the literature (Inman, 2009). Moreover, a five-step framework that HEIs can use to develop leadership has been suggested by Tourish (2012). Although the study by Tourish (2012) does not give details of the research this framework is relies, it does claim that it was based on “substantive” (p.1) research on the subject of leadership development. This framework is depicted as Figure 3.

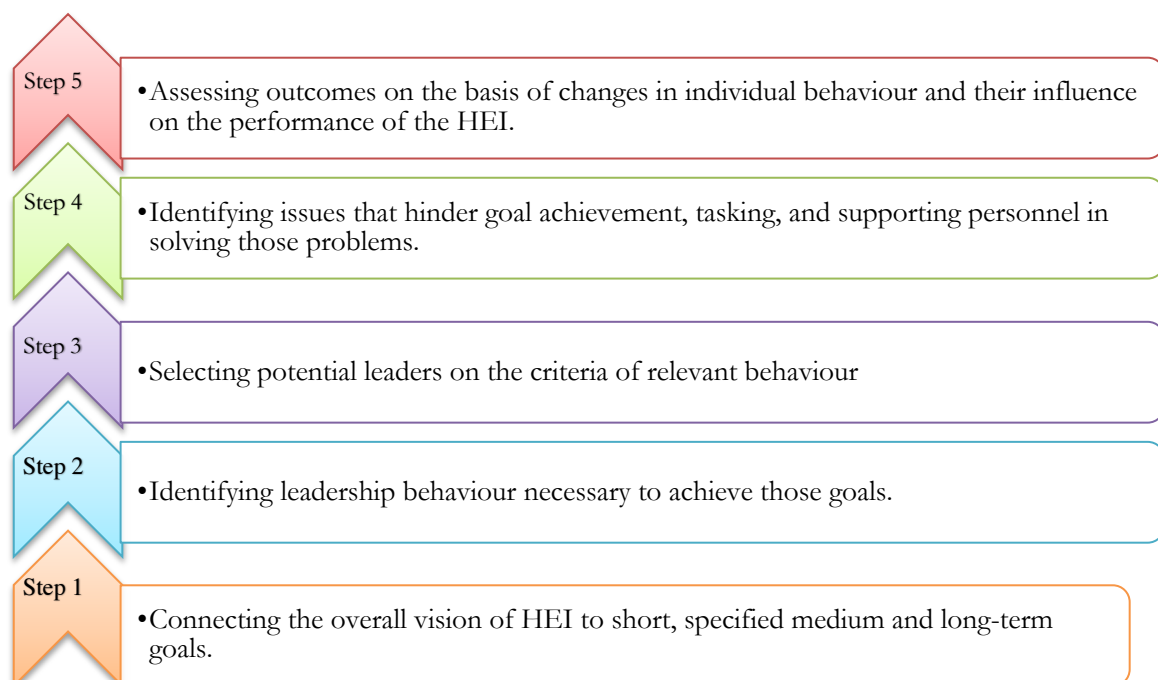


Figure 3: A Five-Step Framework Associated with Leadership Development

Source: Tourish (2012)

The five-step framework for leadership development appearing in Figure 3 is a generic model for leadership development, and therefore, can be applicable to individual level leadership practices. In terms of developing or evaluating a system of leadership and management development in an organisation, Burgoyne's ladder (the scale of integration of management development with career management) may be helpful (Burgoyne, 1999). This comprised six steps as shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4: Burgoyne's Ladder for Management Development in an Organisation

Source: Burgoyne (2009: 9)

This ladder highlights the correlation between effective leadership, management and the evolution of integrated mechanisms for support and development of leaders (Fox and McLeay, 1992). The model in Figure 3 is focused on individual level leadership development in HE whereas the model in Figure 4 is relevant to organisational level leadership development in terms of policies development and operational tactics.

The provision of leadership development opportunities, which are relevant to the post must be accompanied by considerations of the ability of HoDs to actually take advantage of them, and this means that it must be convenient for them to attend these trainings. If

the timing and duration of these training programmes is not compatible with the other official commitments, it is likely that HoDs will not benefit from them (Söderhjelm et al., 2016). Furthermore, it is important that a robust methodology is in place to evaluate the effectiveness of all training opportunities. In this respect, the literature endorses the use of qualitative techniques for evaluating such training, focusing especially on post-learning reflection, as this is more helpful in understanding the impact of leadership development programmes (King and Nesbit, 2015). The importance of self-reflection on the daily practice of a leader in developing leadership skills is also highlighted by Day et al. (2014). In fact, a recent comprehensive review of the literature on the subject has noted a scarcity of research concerned with measuring the effectiveness of leadership development initiatives in the HE context (Dopson et al., 2016). Dopson et al. (2016) attribute this to the difficulty in measuring the impact of such leadership developmental programmes, especially if there is a lack of clarity concerning the anticipated outcomes of such initiatives.

2.6 The Role of HoDs in Achieving Quality

Over the years, leadership in HEIs has become and is continuing to be, more formalised, because a wide range of expectations has become associated with the role (Gordon, 2002). Specifically, at the department level, leaders or manager are increasingly asked to perform a leadership role, which entails the development, communication, and implementation of the departmental mission, vision, strategy, and action plans. Saunders and Sin (2015) studied the experiences of middle level managers in implementing a policy of quality enhancement in learning, teaching and assessment in the context of Scottish HEIs. They collected data through focus group discussions with middle managers in nine Scottish HEIs, who comprised HoDs, Heads of School, Heads of Divisions within a school, and directors of teaching and learning, as well as programme/course leaders. A

key strength of this study is its large sample size (around 100 middle managers) drawn from a variety of academic disciplines. The authors noted that middle managers act as “brokers” and “gatekeepers” in respect of quality policy messages between higher leadership of their universities, and their own departmental colleagues. This role was perceived by the middle managers as challenging and symbolising a cultural rift between managerialism and the values of collegiality that they were meant to espouse. They also felt they did not have the authority to make decisions.

Currently, the HoDs role is seen to be multi-layered and varied, as they are significant players in respect of the achievement of any departmental goal, including that of realising and maintaining quality. Using a mixed methods approach to data collection from quality managers and senior academic staff working in 42 UK HEIs including both pre-and post-1992 institutions, Osseo-Asare et al. (2005) highlighted that effective leadership in HEIs (including at the HoD level) plays a critical role in communicating the institutional mission, vision, values, and principles as well as achieving the successful implementation of the main processes relating to quality. However, Osseo-Asare et al.'s (2005) study does not focus specifically on the role of HoDs in quality initiatives, as it had a broader scope of investigating best practice in a number of different leadership roles and the effectiveness of leadership-staff relationships in improving quality.

Juhl and Christensen (2008) are helpful in this respect, as their discussion of the case of a Danish Business School highlights the HoDs’ role in achieving various dimensions of quality. In respect of research quality, HoDs have little role to play in motivating academics although they can influence research production in a department by encouraging academics to publish. However, most research funding tends to be used for increasing administrative resources, rather than rewarding research quality and thus incentivising HoDs and their departments. Similarly, on the student outcomes'

dimension of quality, HoD's were found to have no direct influence as the employment rate of departmental graduates is also linked to other factors (e.g. soft skills) rather than the qualifications obtained. Juhl and Christensen (2008) did identify a direct link between the HoD role and the achievement of quality in teaching and learning, mainly because public funding is attainment-related. However, it must be noted that the conclusions reached by these authors are not based on empirical data and the article is focused on only one discipline in Denmark, i.e. business, and does not include the perspective of other stakeholders. The views of other stakeholders, especially academics, are important as empirical research in the UK has shown that implementation of a quality management system is viewed with suspicion by staff, who often believe the system to be a means of increasing their accountability (Newton, 2002).

The literature surveyed in this chapter does reveal several gaps. First there is a paucity of empirical work specifically addressing the role of HoDs in quality achievement. Existing research tends to lack empirical grounding and is undertaken mainly in Western countries with long histories of modern educational systems. Clearly, therefore, there is an urgent need for more evidenced-based observations to be made of the role of HoDs in quality achievement, and this is particular pressing in the case of developing and under-resourced countries.

From the review of literature in this section, it seems that quality achievement should be an integral part of the HoD role and appear in the job description. HoDs can discharge this responsibility by using their leadership skills effectively, which in turn suggests that HoDs should be hired, developed, and rewarded in relation to their demonstration of effective leadership and its subsequent direction towards the achievement of quality in their respective departments. There is also a need to empower HoDs appropriately so that the operational resources required to achieve this task are made available.

2.7 Summary

This review of the literature has revealed the complexities of both defining quality in HE and implementing it. Quality can have different meanings to different stakeholders and it is clear there is a conflict between management and academics, in terms of attitudes towards quality. Whereas academics frequently perceive quality holistically as the transformation of their students, management is more likely to have a broader view associated with outputs and setting and maintaining standards.

Various approaches have been identified for implementing quality within an HE context, and resistance to such quality initiatives has been highlighted. Whereas evaluation is seen by management as a positive way of improving and developing skills, many academics have mixed views on the value of such exercises and the ensuing feedback. This tends to make the role of an HoD more challenging as they need to ensure that any such initiatives are seen as integral to quality. It also indicates that the characteristics of an HoD must be carefully considered and highlights the challenges of selecting suitable HoDs, who have the skills and motivation to carry out the role. The professional status of HoDs needs to be enhanced by continuous professional development, so they are supported in carrying out their role through upgrading of their skills and knowledge.

This review clearly showed that many aspects of HoD roles in Saudi HE were under-researched. The existing studies on quality within HEIs in the KSA had almost an exclusive focus on accreditation, overlooking other factors that needed to be taken into account, as identified in the literature discussed above. Therefore, this study, which inquired into the perceptions of Saudi HoDs and other stakeholders allowed more insight into quality initiatives in Saudi HEIs, supporting the primary aim of this research to explore the role that HoDs play in achieving quality in a high-ranking university in the KSA. In doing so, the current study sought to identify the factors that assist and/or

hinder the achievement of quality and how the selection and professional development of HoDs can contribute to this outcome. The study attempted to address the identified gaps in literature by addressing the following research questions:

1. How, if at all, do HoDs at an elite Saudi university achieve quality within their departments?
2. What factors are said to influence the HoDs in trying to achieve departmental quality?
3. How does the selection and development of HoDs influence their achievement of quality?

The next chapter describes the methodology adopted for inquiring into the perceptions of quality within HEIs revealed by participating HoDs in this study.

Chapter 3

Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology adopted in this study. It begins by discussing the theoretical framework for this research, which is undergirded by ontological and epistemological considerations. This is followed by a detailed description of the methodology, including the sampling strategy, ethical considerations, and data collection methods. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the data analysis process and the limitations of the methodology.

3.2 Research Paradigms

In social research, philosophical assumptions influence the ways in which researchers view and value the social world around them (Newby, 2014), which in turn shapes their research and methodological choices. Foremost amongst these are considerations of what researchers believe about the nature of reality (ontology) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology). Philosophical concepts such as ontology and epistemology aid the researcher's understanding of the nature of knowledge and the processes involved in the production of knowledge (O'Leary, 2010).

It is vital to understand research paradigms generally as well the philosophical assumptions undergirding any specific piece of research, because they indicate what researchers "silently think" about research (Scott and Usher, 1999, p.10). Hence, in order to unpack the philosophical assumptions of this study, it is necessary to identify its ontological and epistemological positions, although in practice it is difficult to separate

ontology from epistemology as the two are deeply interconnected. Social researchers use these concepts at various stages of the research process, thereby providing the basis to evaluate the resultant knowledge claims (Creswell, 2003). The concepts are linked to each other in the sense that the selection of one helps in the identification of the other.

In the philosophy of social science, ontology is related to the existence of social reality. It makes assumptions about what kind of things can and do exist, and what reality is. Epistemology is related to the origins and nature of knowledge. It asks, “how do we know?” and emphasises the relationship of the researcher with the phenomenon or object being studied. Furthermore, it also asks what should be considered as acceptable knowledge in a discipline and whether the natural science model should be used to study a social phenomenon (Morrison, 2012). Therefore, epistemology defines the standards for conceptualising and evaluating the knowledge claims (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

There are a number of distinct ontological and epistemological positions, which are termed paradigms or “world views” (Creswell, 2003); therefore, the next section outlines the key assumptions of the two most prominent paradigms (positivism and interpretivism) and their impact on methodological choices, the understanding of which is key to establishing the justification for the methodological choices in this chapter.

3.2.1 Positivism

In terms of ontology, positivism is based upon the idea of a single, observable reality that is unaffected by human consciousness or perception (Hartas, 2010). In relation to epistemology, positivism contends that the only way to apprehend objective reality is through human senses and observations, and that the methods of the natural sciences apply equally to the social sciences (Mertens, 2005). Viewing the natural and social worlds as being equally subject to universal laws and conditions (Gray, 2009), positivism holds that natural and social phenomena are measurable and amenable to causal

explanations and that the knowledge produced as a result of investigation into these realities is generalisable and replicable (Collis and Hussey, 2009; Creswell, 2013). Methodologically, knowledge in positivism is described quantitatively and quantitative research methods are used, with experimentation and observation being key to explaining the natural or social phenomenon being investigated.

3.2.2 Interpretivism

In contrast to positivism, the interpretivist paradigm rests upon the idea of multiple realities, none of which are pre-determined, but rather socially constructed through the experiences and perceptions of the actors involved (Collis and Hussey, 2009). For this reason, the same social situation may be perceived differently by different individuals (Collis and Hussey, 2009; Saunders et al., 2009). Therefore, the goal of research conducted under a constructionist ontology is to understand reality from the participants' points of view. Epistemologically, interpretivism holds that knowledge is always co-constructed during interactional encounters and therefore influenced by the values of the researcher and the participants. In contrast to positivism wherein researcher presence is seen as a source of bias, interpretivism does not believe that the involvement of the researcher in the data collection process invalidates the data, as long as the researcher openly acknowledges his or her pre-existing assumptions, beliefs and background vis-à-vis the phenomenon under study through self-reflexive practice during the research process (Lambert et al., 2010). Furthermore, another aspect of interpretivism is that it considers the world as symbolic which helps us to understand how we assign meaning within the world (Morrison, 2012, p.19).

In terms of methodology, interpretivists argue that as the subject matter of social sciences (people and social institutions) is different from that of the natural sciences, natural science methods cannot be applicable to the study of social sciences (Bryman,

2012). Rather the subjective meanings attributed by people to the social phenomenon (Collis and Hussey, 2009) are considered to be of value in understanding the phenomenon itself. Reality is viewed as “culturally derived and historically situated interpretations” (Crotty, 1998, p.67) of the social world, meaning that interpretivism accommodates individualistic and subjective accounts of what is being studied, as these represent how each participant is experiencing and interpreting the social world around himself or herself.

Having established the key differences between positivism and interpretivism in the foregoing discussion, the next section explains why it was appropriate to study the phenomenon in this research through the lens of interpretivism.

3.2.3 Rationale for Adopting the Interpretivist Paradigm in this Study

A review of existing literature suggests that there is little research on the role of HoDs in achieving quality in HE, especially in the context of KSA, implying that there are no pre-existing theories or knowledge that positivist research could confirm or disconfirm. Further, as QA in HEIs in KSA is a complex phenomenon, in which multiple organisations and people from different disciplinary and cultural backgrounds are involved (Onsman, 2010), a constructionist ontological approach was deemed appropriate. This is because the said approach accepts the existence of multiple realities and context-specificity and rejects the concept of universal knowledge, thereby evidencing the potential for creating a better understanding of QA in Saudi HEIs. It also enabled investigation of how HoDs perceived their role with regard to achieving quality in their everyday roles. In addition, the research questions were exploratory in nature, which in turn dictated exploratory methods to collect data for understanding the phenomenon being studied.

As this project sought to understand the experiences of HoDs in Saudi HEIs in relation to quality achievement, an interpretivist paradigm seems appropriate (Saunders et al., 2009). The HE sector in KSA has its own distinctive culture and policies, and HoDs' own perceptions of their practices cannot be fully understood without reference to that social context. In this research, it was assumed that the role of HoDs in achieving quality would have different meanings for different individuals. This meant that being the researcher, I would be part of the research process (Morrison, 2012) and therefore an active contributor and co-constructor of the emergent understandings. Further, as it was my belief that the research participants had important insights to contribute about the phenomenon from their unique perspectives, the use of interpretivist lens appeared appropriate in this study due to the value this paradigm places upon participant perspectives and feelings.

While the discussion above highlights the advantages of adopting the interpretivist approach in this study, it must be noted that a key criticism of this stance is that if knowledge is socially and culturally specified, it is not generalizable (Scott and Usher, 1999). However, in qualitative research, generalisation is not sought for the population. Rather, theoretical ideas may be transferable from one context to another. This seems to be the case with this research where findings about the role of HoDs may not be applicable to other statistically defined populations but may have theoretical resonance for other contexts. Other criticisms relate to the way the researchers' own values and experiences may influence the research. Interpretivists counter that due to the co-constructed nature of knowledge, the researcher's values and experiences cannot be detached in making knowledge claims (Morrison, 2012).

In this research, I argue that I did have a role in the way the research questions were asked, participants were selected and interviewed, as well as how data was interpreted. As

I believed that there were multiple realities in the social world, which were co-produced by the researcher and the research participants, this led me to subscribe to the interpretivist view, which is flexible and emphasises the meaning-making process of each individual. Further, it was my belief and observation that the “role of HoDs” and “quality achievement in an HE context” are understood in different ways, in different geographical and policy contexts. For example, understandings and expectations of the ‘role of HoDs in achieving quality’ in the UK context are different from the Saudi Arabian context. Hence, the adoption of an interpretivist approach with its accommodation of diverse accounts appeared most appropriate for this project.

Having explained the choice of the paradigm in the current study, the discussion in the next section moves to the research methodology.

3.3 Research Methodology

3.3.1 Qualitative and Quantitative Research Approaches

Research methodology is a set of procedures upon which the research is based. Morrison (2012, p.15) explain “methodology as a theory of how researchers gain knowledge in research contexts and why”. In social science research, although methodology is a priori to research methods in principle, in practice both are interrelated. The main purpose of using methodology is to define the research approach, which will address the research questions (Bryman, 2012).

In general, there are two main approaches in social science research, namely qualitative and quantitative. Research methodologies within the quantitative approach include experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational and surveys, whilst within the qualitative approach, methodologies include case study, ethnography and grounded theory (Creswell, 2013). This project followed a qualitative research approach and a case study methodology.

There is no sharp dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative research because sometimes researchers in qualitative research also use quantitative measures to understand a phenomenon and vice versa (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Bryman, 2012). However, quantitative methodologies are more interested in the measurement of phenomena, whereas the qualitative approach is more focused on exploring the meanings social concepts have for people (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative research aims to understand how people themselves make sense of the social world around them, how they interpret it and what processes are involved in this sense making and interpretation (Merriam, 2009). In a qualitative approach, the data collection mainly takes the form of a discussion or social interaction between the researcher and the participants (Kvale, 1996).

Broad questions are asked to give the participants the opportunity to express their own views on a given social situation or phenomenon (Bryman, 2012).

The language and the words used become important in the data collection, analysis and presentation of the findings. Additionally, the researcher's own social, cultural and educational background becomes important in the interpretation of the data (Hartas, 2010). Another key characteristic of qualitative research is that the researcher does not have any pre-set hypotheses or theories in mind to prove or disprove. The researcher employs an iterative rather than a linear process of describing, examining and interpreting the empirical evidence (Bryman, 2012). Qualitative research does not deal with statistical data and generally takes place in natural settings, which allows the researcher to be close to participants (Creswell, 2003).

Qualitative research can provide in-depth insights into questions such as “how” and “why” (Wellington, 2000). In this research, I was interested in understanding “what” role HoDs play in relation to quality achievement. This is in addition to exploring “what” factors influenced the abilities of HoDs to achieve quality and “how” their selection and development affected achievement of quality. Accordingly, it was considered appropriate to conduct a qualitative inquiry, as this approach stresses subjectivity and interpretation. Moreover, it also allowed the flexibility needed to explore the multiple realities across various organisational and professional hierarchies involved in achieving quality in HEIs of KSA.

3.3.2 Research Approach

Qualitative research can use a range of different approaches, one of which is case study. Case study embraces the complexity of the phenomenon and accepts that there may be multiple factors involved in the occurrence of the phenomenon. It allows the phenomenon to be studied in real time and within naturally occurring events, using a

variety of different data collection methods (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009; Creswell, 2013). Because the phenomenon is being studied in its natural setting, researchers can look at it in depth and holistically, which allows them to address how and why questions (Yin, 2014). This leads to a higher level of conceptual validity (Flyvbjerg, 2011). A case study methodology is also “a step to action” (Bassey, 1999, p.23) as findings from a case study can be used for addressing real world issues. One of the key advantages of case study is its flexibility and use of multiple methods of data collection (Matthews and Ross, 2010).

There are different types of case studies, described by different authors (Bassey, 1999; Robson, 2011; Yin, 2014); however, according to Yin (2014), the three main types are exploratory, explanatory and descriptive case studies. Summarising the main differences between three types of case studies, Yin (2014) notes that in exploratory case studies, the researcher has limited knowledge about the phenomenon; hence some data is collected to evaluate whether the topic is worthy of further research. Descriptive case studies describe a phenomenon with special focus on the process of something happening. Explanatory case study is used where the aim is to explain “why” something happened the way it happened. The current research employed an exploratory type in order to understand how quality is achieved by HoDs in the HE sector of KSA. It sought neither theory building nor testing (Bassey, 1999), and the selected case (i.e. an HEI) acted as a means to understand the phenomenon of interest (i.e. the achievement of quality by HoDs in an HEI). It is important to clarify that HoDs themselves were *not* my case. Rather, the case was the selected HEI, which idea aligned well to the notion of most case study research being conducted on a single case to gain deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Stake, 1995).

In this research, the selected case (the HEI) was purposive in nature. I purposefully selected a high-ranked university from the KSA, to undertake this research because it is

one of the oldest and largest public sector HEIs in the KSA. In addition to this, Al-Jawda University was among the first to receive national and international accreditation. A detailed explanation of this is provided in the next section. In this research, I was interested in “knowing more about less”, rather than “less about more”. Hence, I decided to use a single case study to attain “depth” rather than “breadth” of understanding (Gerring, 2007, p.49).

3.3.2.1 Generalisation from Case Study and its Limitations

While a case study is useful for understanding a phenomenon in depth, I acknowledge that there are a few limitations associated with case study and I sought to address these while conducting this project.

1. According to Yin (2014), researchers have identified a lack of adequate rigour and poor practices in following systematic process in case study research. In my research, I have documented each step of the research. My decisions during the research process were based on guidelines offered in existing literature in the field.
2. Moreover, because of the focus on a single case, the potential for researcher bias can be increased, although I do not have any personal bias or affiliation with the selected institution. Al-Jawda University is identified as highly ranked in government documentation. I am neither an employee of this university nor do I have any personal connection with the institution.
3. The most common limitation of case study research is its inability to generalise or transfer its findings to other cases (Bassey, 1999; Gerring, 2007; Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge, 2007; Robson, 2011; Yin, 2014). The findings from my case study research may not be statistical, but only theoretically transferable. In statistical generalisation, a researcher “seeks to move from a sample to a

population, based on, for example, sampling strategies, frequencies, statistical significance and effect size” (Cohen et al., 2011, p.294). Theoretical generalisability, however, means that concepts and ideas are transferable to other theoretically similar contexts. In this study, I focus on “transferability”, rather than “generalisability”; however, although the first term is used for generalisation in qualitative contexts, both terms are sometimes used interchangeably (Bryman, 2012).

4. Another concern raised about case study research is the amount of time and resources needed to complete such in-depth studies. However, this investment would have value in terms of thorough understanding, which my research provided.

The limitations of case study outlined above can be addressed by ensuring appropriate checks and balances are in place and by utilising methodological and participant triangulation (see in particular Section 3.8 for further details).

The results of this case study can be transferable since, in the Saudi context, there are observable similarities between HEIs. These include:

1. As mentioned in the Introduction Chapter, all Saudi HEIs are under the authority of the MoHE, hence, they must obey the rules and guidance of MoHE. Thus, they have limited autonomy in their decision-making and are required to follow the same regulations.
2. Centralisation and top-down approaches dominate the Saudi HE system; therefore, any resultant issues will have a similar impact on Saudi universities.
3. Since academics at all Saudi universities receive the same type of incentives and follow the same regulations, they face similar issues.

Therefore, it seems that the results obtained from this study could be transferable to other prestigious Saudi HEIs. The next section will discuss the population and sampling for this study.

3.4 Population and Sampling

3.4.1 Online Questionnaire

A good sample should be representative of the target population. To achieve such a sample, different sampling strategies can be used; however, selecting a truly representative sample is a hard and costly process (Dörnyei, 2003). If resources permit, a researcher can study the total population, rather than only a sample of the cases. In the context of this research study, there are approximately 120 HoDs in Al-Jawda University. As this questionnaire targeted HoDs in particular, a link to the online questionnaire was distributed to all HoDs, thereby covering the total population. With 59 questionnaires being completed, the response rate was almost 50%, which is a good response rate for an online survey, considering that online surveys generally have a lower response rate than paper-based ones (Nulty, 2008).

3.4.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Purposive sampling, was used for selecting participants for interviews. In purposive sampling, participants or cases are selected “with purpose”, which implies that the participants or cases are chosen because their characteristics or experiences are relevant to the research questions (Matthews and Ross, 2010). This gives the researcher an opportunity to study the research topic in-depth. Care is observed to select only those cases that have potential to reveal the most about the research topic being studied (Matthews and Ross, 2010, p.167).

Although purposive sampling is criticised as being non-representative of the broader population and for selection bias (Cohen et al., 2000), it suited the purpose of this study, which was to gain an insight into, and a deeper understanding of, the participants' perceptions regarding the achievement of quality in Al-Jawda University, rather than generalisability of findings to the wider population. The selected sample consisted of male and female participants, including Saudi and non-Saudi nationals involved in QA systems in Al-Jawda University.

In total, 36 participants were interviewed, including 15 HoDs and 21 other key players in quality achievement. In line with Strauss and Corbin (1990), a range of factors including access, resources, research objectives and the available time were considered when deciding the number of interviews to be conducted. It was felt that 36 interviews offered a substantial dataset in terms of the themes related to the research questions. It is important to note that faculty structure in Saudi Arabian universities differs from that in the UK. For example, Business is classified as a science while Sport belongs to humanities. Hence, in the results section, participants' disciplines have been broadly categorised (i.e. engineering and computer science have been included under 'Science College') in order to protect their identities. Interview participants were drawn from diverse disciplinary, national, gender and linguistic backgrounds (see Appendix K for more details about the interviewees). The inclusion of these participants in the study aided me in obtaining a holistic picture of the phenomenon of quality achievement in the University. Table 5 shows the number of interview participants in each category/job role.

Table 5: The Participation According to Category and Volume

Category Level	Participants	No. of Participants
Departmental	HoDs	13
	Deputy HoDs	2
	Heads of Departmental Quality Committees (HQC)	2
College	Deans	3
	Vice-Dean of Quality	1
	Heads of Quality Units (HQU)	5
University	Former Rector	1
	Vice-Rector of Quality and Development	1
	Quality & Development Deanship Members (DDQMS)	8

The following section provides details about how the interview participants were recruited and selected.

Departmental level participants:

1. HoDs: Care was taken to select HoDs from as many colleges and departments in Al-Jawda University as possible. The online questionnaire was used to select participants for semi-structured interviews. The selection was based on (a) the respondents' willingness to participate in the semi-structured interviews (b) their prioritising different aspects of quality. Selection was also based on (c) their extended suggestions on how quality achievement can be improved. The majority of the interviewed HoDs were relatively junior members; however, it is not known whether this situation is typical in all Saudi universities or is a distinctive feature of Al-Jawda University. If so, this can potentially limit the transferability of the findings to other prestigious Saudi universities. Profiles of HoDs are given in Appendix K (items 1-13). All HoDs in Al-Jawda University are male, except

for one. Efforts were made to contact the female HoD to obtain a different perspective on the issue, but to no avail.

2. Deputy HoDs: Two females were invited from the female campus to give an insight into their responsibilities as HoDs (see Appendix K, items 14-15). It is worth mentioning here that HoD is a title given to males who work in the male campus; while their female counterparts in the female campuses have the same responsibilities but a different title, i.e. Deputy Head. Therefore, in the findings chapters both are referred to as HoDs.
3. HQC: I conducted two interviews with HQC from two different departments. These Heads were selected with help from the Vice-Deans of their respective colleges (see items 33 and 34 in Appendix K). It is possible that being nominated by the Vice-Dean skewed the data; however, there was no alternative way of gaining access and the quote given in the later section demonstrate that the participants did speak very honestly.

College level participants

4. Deans: I had a meeting with the Assistant Vice-Rector for Development and Quality. We discussed the organogram of the University-level Quality Department. On the basis of this discussion, I selected participants for interviews. The Assistant also proved helpful in facilitating contacts with the participants; however, he did not exert any influence on selecting particular respondents for interviews. The profiles of the Deans are given in Appendix K (items 16-18).
5. Vice-Dean for Quality and Development: The response rate from Vice-Deans for Quality in academic colleges was relatively low. Therefore, only one Vice-

Dean of Quality from one of the Science Colleges was interviewed. This Vice-Dean was recommended by his Dean (see Appendix K, item 19).

6. HQU: I conducted five interviews with female HQU from different colleges and of different nationalities (see items 28-32 in Appendix K). The Vice-Dean of DDQ provided her support for further selection of HQU.

University level participants

7. Former Rector: I conducted an interview with a Former Rector (the leader of the *Quality Revolution* in Al-Jawda University), who was recommended by Vice-Rector Assistant of Development and Quality (see item 36 in Appendix K).
8. Vice-Rector: I conducted an interview with the Vice-Rector for Development and Quality, who was introduced by the Assistant Vice-Rector for Development and Quality (see item 35 in Appendix K).
9. DDQMs: I conducted eight interviews with the members of DDQ; i.e. the Dean, two Vice-Deans and five consultants of different nationalities. I contacted the Dean at the start of the project and he extended his support by helping me in accessing and interviewing his colleagues (see Appendix K, items 20 - 27).

3.5. Access

The Rector of Al-Jawda University was identified as the person most suited to authorise the research. A letter introducing the project and its methodology, along with an endorsement from my supervisor, was sent to the Rector of the selected university, requesting access to HoDs and others involved in the implementation of a QA system. That Rector gave immediate permission by signing off the access permit indicates the interest of higher-level management in the research. The Rector delegated this task

(accessing potential participants), to the Vice-Rector for Graduate Studies and Scientific Research, who subsequently acted as a facilitator within this institution.

The questionnaire was formally endorsed by the Vice-Rectorate for Graduate Studies and Scientific Research in May 2014. The validated questionnaires were then distributed to all HoDs in Al-Jawda University through their official e-mail addresses. The majority of interview volunteers provided contact details on the questionnaires. Although I faced some difficulties in identifying and contacting potential participants, my overall experience of undertaking fieldwork was positive. Senior leaders were very cooperative, in that they facilitated access to the participants, enabling me to complete the interviews in a relatively smooth manner.

3.6 Research Methods

The choice of the research method is directly related to the nature of the research questions being studied and the type of data required to answer them (Matthews and Ross, 2010; Silverman, 2010). Rowbottom and Aiston (2006) argue that research methods should be mixed and matched according to the aims of the research. Quantitative and qualitative researchers may contradict each other, but there is also a case for using qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single research project. Wellington (2000) argues that qualitative and quantitative approaches could benefit from each other and this has been proved through a variety of educational research efforts. Smith (2002; 2005; 2007) for example, studied the contribution of HoDs in British HEIs. This research used a survey questionnaire that was analysed statistically and then was consolidated with qualitative data that was analysed interpretively. Learning from Smith (2002; 2005; 2007), in the first stage of data collection for this study, I deployed an online questionnaire, while in the second stage, semi-structured interviews were utilised to collect data from the participants.

Initially, focus groups were considered for this study as they allow the researchers to collect complex, rich and experience-related data from a large number of people at a given time (Matthews and Ross, 2010) and suit “collective” cultures (Thomas, 2008) which is true of Saudi Arabia. However, having conducted research in Saudi HE, Alebaikan (2010) identified that people are hesitant to express their views, experiences and feelings in a public setting such as a university. Moreover, “focus groups are ideally run in accessible locations where participants can feel comfortable and relaxed” (Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge, 2007, p.17). Therefore, in this study focus group discussions involving participants from different faculties and academic departments may have been challenging due to the lack of confidentiality and the sensitivity of the topic. Since achieving quality is the main task of the HoDs in their academic departments, it might have been challenging for the HoDs to openly talk about this topic, which is directly related to their role performance within a university setting. Furthermore, the practical aspect of organising focus groups was seen as problematic as it was difficult to gather participants from diverse colleges in one place due to issues such as timetabling and the physical expanse of the spacious campuses of Al-Jawda University. Moreover, some of the female participants may not have been comfortable in a focus group that included male members due to the gender segregation prevalent in Saudi culture.

The following sections describe in detail the methods used in this research, namely an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

3.6.1 Online Questionnaire

Questionnaires can elicit quantitative or qualitative data or a mixture of the two, and they are frequently used within case studies to provide quantitative data (Yin, 2003). A questionnaire is helpful in collecting factual data such as age, gender, and income. It can also be used to study knowledge, attitudes, opinions and experiences of people

(Matthews and Ross, 2010). As with any data collection instrument, the questionnaire also has its disadvantages. These can include low rate of return, inability to clarify the questions in case of any ambiguity, and different interpretations of the questions by respondents, which may decrease authenticity of the data (Cohen et al., 2011).

Keeping in mind the above-mentioned advantages and disadvantages, I used an online questionnaire in order to:

1. obtain background information from participants,
2. elicit their opinion about different aspects of QA,
3. collect initial data and identify issues that could be further explored in the interviews, and
4. select appropriate participants for semi-structured one-to-one interviews.

3.6.1.1 Administering Online Questionnaire

Questionnaires can be paper-based or online. Online questionnaires have the advantage of being easy to administer so that a larger sample is easier to achieve (Robson, 2011). However, there are a number of factors that need to be considered before making a decision about using online questionnaires, which include the availability of the internet to the target participants and participants being computer literate. The participants in this study being faculty and staff members at a leading university in the KSA, had internet access as well as computer expertise. Therefore, it was an appropriate decision for me to use an online questionnaire. Furthermore, I was able to administer the online questionnaires and receive responses while abroad. This could have been difficult with paper-based questionnaires. Moreover, as there is segregation of sexes in Saudi Arabia and females are not permitted to mix with males, the questionnaire could not have been administered directly to the male respondents.

3.6.1.2 Content and Organisation of the Questionnaire

The content of a questionnaire depends on the aim and research questions that need to be addressed (Robson, 2011). The range of questions identified for this project was based on the review of the existing literature and the scope of the research objectives. Moreover, I discussed the content of the questionnaire with a few HoDs and other key academics working in Al-Jawda University, prior to the formal pilot (see below Section 3.6.1.3), and this proved helpful in improving the content of the questionnaire.

Different types of questions, such as closed questions, with a five-point Likert Scale, 'yes' or 'no', single or multiple choice and range questions were used. Following the advice of Peterson (2000) and Dörnyei (2003), participants were offered comment boxes to elaborate on their answers, which provided insightful data on the subject. At the end, I asked each respondent to include their contact details, if they were willing to be interviewed (See Appendix C).

The questionnaire was divided into five main sections as follows:

- a) Demographic information: gender, name of college and department, nationality and qualification.
- b) Service characteristics: position in the university and how they were appointed, years of experience, nature of job contract, knowledge of their job description and their motivation to become HoDs.
- c) Training and professional development: training received before and after assuming the role of HoD and their confidence in performing the role of HoD.
- d) Quality achievement: Participants were asked to characterise different aspects of quality, hindrances and facilitators for achieving quality, and the role of different internal stakeholders in achieving quality.

- e) Role of NCAAA: Participants were asked to identify the role of NCAAA in achieving quality and the extent to which they were satisfied with NCAAA's performance.

I decided to use SurveyGizmo to administer the questionnaire, as it offers advanced features for questionnaire layout, types of responses, data analysis and generating data reports. It is also user friendly in terms of designing, sharing and accessing questionnaires by the researcher and the participants. The respondents simply need to open the shared link on their computers, iPads or smart phones, thereby facilitating participants' convenience with regard to time, place and available device, which can in turn contribute to a higher response rate.

Dillman et al., (1998) suggest that a plain and simple layout is more likely to be completed. I took this advice on board, while producing a questionnaire design that was suitably interesting and eye-catching. A 'save' option was offered so that participants did not need to complete the questionnaire in one sitting, in addition to effective navigation and skip patterns to allow participants to answer only those questions that they deemed relevant. The questionnaire was designed to be self-administered. To facilitate this, an information sheet about the purpose of the questionnaire was provided in the opening section. Confidentiality was assured to the participants and their consent was taken before they began answering the questions.

3.6.1.3 Developing the Questionnaire

Piloting all aspects of the questionnaire is essential to make sure it can achieve its objectives (Oppenheim, 1992). Therefore, the questionnaire was piloted with 20 people, including seven HoDs from different Saudi universities and two key players in quality departments of Al-Jawda University. The pilot data is not used in the actual analysis for

this research. These volunteers gave me their feedback on the questionnaire, including suggestions to reduce the length of it, add some questions (e.g. the role of DDQ), and insert more options for some responses (e.g. Q3 about accreditation) in addition to 'Yes' and 'No' options I added '*pending approval*' and '*I do not know*'. In response to these suggestions, I improved the questionnaire by:

- a) deleting some questions asking for information which was difficult for participants to recall (e.g. type and length of training received),
- b) adding more quality-related questions and response options, which helped the participants to give accurate information and,
- c) changing terminology of some response options, such as administrative nomenclature about the system being used in Al-Jawda University.

3.6.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

This research project used semi-structured interviews because they are an essential source of information (Yin, 2009). "Interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow humans" (Fontana and Frey, 2008, p.118). Interviews are useful in measuring social phenomena, but they are also suitable for understanding individual feelings and opinions (Matthews and Ross, 2010).

In qualitative research, "interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but rather active interaction between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results" (Fontana and Frey, 2008, p.119). In this sense, interviews can be used to study "the hows of people's lives (the constructive work involved in producing order in everyday life) as well as the traditional whats (the activities of everyday life)" (Fontana and Frey, 2008, p.119). With this understanding, I have used interviews to study *how* HoDs achieve quality in their departments, *what* factors help or hinder HoDs from

achieving quality as well as *how* selection and professional development influence HoDs' abilities to achieve quality.

In general, qualitative interviews are of three types: unstructured; semi-structured; and structured. While unstructured interviews are more open and start with a broad question about views or experiences of a social phenomenon, structured interviews adhere to a pre-decided list of questions, irrespective of the differences in their qualitative responses (Bryman, 2012). A combination of the two can be achieved in semi-structured interviews, which include a pre-determined topic and some specific questions and allow researcher's flexibility in terms of content and time, depending on the generated responses. The choice of the interview type depends on the purpose of the research. If the purpose is to make a comparison across data sets, then the interview is likely to be more standardised. However, if the purpose is to gain data regarding unique and personalised experiences of participants, then the interview will be more unstructured (Cohen et al., 2011). Hence, semi-structured interviews allow the coverage of key topics and accessing of in-depth and personal experiences of the participants through suitable probing of the interviewee responses (Bryman, 2012).

For the purpose of this research, I used semi-structured interviews since the study aimed to explore the individual experiences of HoDs regarding quality achievement and a standardised approach would have been counter-productive. Semi-structured interviews gave me flexibility to steer the interview according to the topic, whereas an unstructured approach would have led to digressions and divergences un conducive to the emergence of coherent themes. Such an approach allowed the research participants to openly express their views about the role of HoDs and give access to in-depth perceptions of their personal experiences, despite a diversity of viewpoints and experiences of quality achievement. Hence, interviews allowed the obtaining of multiple perspectives of the

participants (Robson, 2002) as data was gathered through direct interaction with these interviewees, thus offering unique possibilities to explore other points of view and to understand their social world (Coleman, 2012b).

3.6.2.1 Piloting the Interviews

Before conducting the actual study, I piloted my instrument with four participants from Al-Jawda University in order to a) develop an appropriate access strategy, b) test the interview guide and c) improve my interviewing skills. A diagram indicating how the pilot study was conducted is presented in Appendix J.

Following the obtaining of permission from Al-Jawda University for the pilot study, selected participants were approached and an information sheet on the research was shared with them. Once consent had been secured from interested participants, three face-to-face interviews were conducted, of which two interviews were carried out in English and one in Arabic. The fourth interview was conducted through Skype, though there were some challenges in terms of the internet connection and the voice of the participant was not clear. Considering the connectivity issue which hindered one-to-one interaction with the fourth interviewee, I anticipated that there would be technical challenges as well as some important data might be lost (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011; Bryman, 2012; Coleman, 2012b), subsequently deciding not to conduct interviews via Skype for the actual study.

During the pilot study, I noticed that participants whom I interviewed in English at their request sometimes shifted to Arabic in their responses. Owing to the flexibility of using a qualitative type of interview, I would also switch to Arabic, which required searching for the relevant questions in the Arabic version of the document. Based on the pilot study, Arabic and English versions were combined into a single document (i.e. the interview

schedules have both languages in the same line) to prevent confusion on the part of the participants of the actual study.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the interview questions, pilot interviews were transcribed and analysed. I found that there were some questions, such as those on NCAAA and Departmental Quality Committee (DQC), that HoDs had answered quite superficially. Based on that, the questions were phrased more generally to invite a more reflective and in-depth response. Moreover, more questions about training, understanding of quality, and hindrances for HoDs were added. In addition, the pilot study identified the need to clarify the wording of a few questions. Subsequently, these questions were added, the wording was changed and the order of the questions was amended to gain a logical flow. An updated interview schedule is given in Appendix D.

3.6.2.2 Conducting the Interviews

There are hierarchical relationships in qualitative interviewing (Fontana and Frey, 2008), which extend beyond gender to other social factors such as profession, age, social class and so on. This was very relevant to my research, given the “paternalistic social system” (Fontana and Frey, 2008, p.135) prevalent in the gender segregation in KSA. A significant feature of this project is that I conducted face-to-face interviews with all my participants, not just the female ones. To my knowledge, this has never been done before because the cultural context of the KSA imposes restrictions on both genders meeting and communicating face to face (Alebaikan, 2010).

I met the research participants in person after scheduling interviews on an individual basis. All the interviews were mutually agreed upon in terms of time, privacy and a noise-free environment. The interviews were conducted in two phases based on the availability of the participants:

Phase-1: Eight interviews were conducted across August - September 2014. Since the university had just resumed from the summer break, not many participants were available even though there was less administrative pressure on HoDs at that time.

Phase-2: The remaining 28 interviews were conducted between December 2014 and January 2015. At this time, more respondents were available and they had less administrative work since it was the end of the semester.

The selection of an appropriate place for the interviews was of prime concern to me since the first interview did not record well due to noise and other interruptions. Hence, for the subsequent interviews, I used a meeting room offered by DDQ, which is located between the male and female campuses and accessible to both genders. I conducted the interviews with male participants from the Humanities Colleges in the common meeting room, whereas the female and male participants from Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry Colleges were interviewed in their offices. This was possible because women are allowed to enter those campuses where there is a mixed gender staff and student population.

Interviewing the participants in the meeting room contributed significantly to the richness of the data since these participants experienced a higher level of comfort and they seemed more open, transparent and relaxed, as they were away from their workplace and other staff members. Consequently, they were able to give valuable responses even in the case of sensitive issues where they might not have been so critical in a more public forum. For example, a Vice-Dean of Quality demonstrated openness during the data collection, saying:

I don't say NC-triple A, I say NC trouble A. Because of a lot of orders, a lot of things. They go into small details and for everything, they need evidence. It's very defined. *This is between us* - I give this definition to NCAAA - the smartest way to waste time and money. It is a plot. We used to sit for hours with the HoDs to discuss only two items with evidence. It's really crazy and you're going why? And if we're going to do it for each item, oh my God!

Prior to arranging the interview appointments, a Participant Information Sheet along with the Consent Form was emailed, detailing the aims of this research (see Appendix B). In addition, written consent was obtained from each participant prior to conducting the interview. The participants had the option to be interviewed in English or Arabic or a mixture of both languages. Depending on the participants, interviews with HoDs lasted up to 133 minutes, whereas interviews with other stakeholders lasted up to 85 minutes.

In most cases, the interview data was digitally recorded, after making the participants aware of this arrangement, and then transcribed for analysis. Participants were assured about the confidentiality of the data and the majority of them were comfortable with being recorded. The recordings helped me to easily review and accurately transcribe the interviews. In a few cases where the participants refused to be recorded, I relied on writing notes during and immediately after the interview. I recorded interview data on two smart phones and one iPad, which was easy to carry, and also simple to transfer the data to my personal laptop. Multiple devices were used in case of technical issues or the risk of losing data. After each interview, I immediately tested the recorder and wrote any comment on the nature of the interview, and then transferred data from these devices to my password-protected personal laptop. For further safety of the data, I copied these files to web based data storage facilities, for example, Dropbox, iCloud and SugarSync.

In addition to ensuring that the questions outlined in my interview schedule were properly addressed during each interview, I tried to ensure that the process of probing did not inhibit me from listening to the participant's responses actively (Kvale, 1996). I went with the flow of the interview without deliberately steering or asking questions about any specific issue. This was because I did not intend to lead the interviewees into answering the questions in a specific manner; therefore, I avoided asking leading

questions. Furthermore, I observed cultural norms of interaction, for example, when and whether to interrupt.

3.6.2.3 Order of Questions in the Interviews

As the order of questions is important in the interview, the questions progressed from general and neutral questions to more specific ones. The interview schedule for HoDs contains six key aspects, as follows:

1. the participants' understanding of quality,
2. the role of HoDs in achieving quality,
3. factors influencing HoDs abilities to achieve quality,
4. selection of HoDs,
5. professional development of HoDs and
6. the role of NCAAA in achieving quality (see Appendix D).

The interviews began with introductory questions followed by exploratory and explanatory questions about the above-mentioned elements. Depending on the initial responses of the participants, I moved on to more probing and follow-up questions about the approaches and practices related to quality and the rationale underpinning these, as suggested by Kvale (1996). Most participants spoke in detail, indicating that my probes were fit-for-purpose.

Because the case study was exploratory, the questions included in the interview schedule were open-ended to give the participants an opportunity to express their own views. At the end of each interview, I asked if there was anything the interviewee would like to add. The interview schedules were adapted according to the professional roles and the involvement of each participant in achieving quality (see Appendices E-I). Other stakeholders were asked specifically about their perception regarding the role of HoDs in

quality achievement and how they can be well supported. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer may adapt questions according to the situation and conversation, so it is not necessary to ask the same questions of all participants (Robson, 2002; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

3.7 Data Analysis

Once the questionnaires were returned and interviews completed, data analysis was undertaken.

3.7.1 Online Questionnaire Data Analysis

The HoD data retrieved from the questionnaire was partly analysed with the use of tools and reports available in SurveyGizmo. At the beginning, descriptive statistics were used to determine the distribution of the data and generated tables of frequency. Results were presented through simple graphs, charts and tables.

In the Likert scale type questions, to determine which of the factors was the most significant, I summarised the total of scores 4 and 5 (scores reflecting the high extreme) and then ranked factors based on the total score (from highest to the lowest score where number 1 is the most influential element). If two of the items had the same total then I looked at the score of 5 to justify the rank order. Such a mode of interpretation of data was applied to those Likert scale responses that included a list of factors to be ranked (e.g. Q12). Other scale-type question responses, such as Q15, touching upon opinions and feelings, were presented in the form of charts or graphs without ranking calculation in order to demonstrate proportions. The data retrieved from multiple choice questions was also organised in the form of graphs and charts in order to compare with interview data. Rich qualitative data was also elicited from the open-ended questions (Q23 and Q26) and the comment boxes. This was then compared with the interview data.

3.7.2 Interviews Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves transcribing, organising, and making sense of the data. There are a range of possible methods such as narrative, discourse, conversational, phenomenological, framework and thematic analysis. However, the form of analysis should fit the purpose of the study (Cohen et al., 2011). For this study, thematic analysis was chosen, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). Themes aid in capturing key aspects of the data in relation to the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The aim of analysing interviews data for this project was to identify main points related to the research questions, such as interpretations of quality, its facilitators and hindrances. Hence, thematic analysis fits the purpose of this research. In terms of its actual practice, a thematic analysis involves being familiar with the raw data, generating codes, sub-themes and general themes.

Qualitative data analysis ranges from descriptive to interpretive. In descriptive data analysis, the researcher just describes what occurred in the data. However, in interpretative analysis, the researcher tries to infer meaning from the responses (Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge, 2007). An interpretative analysis is a higher level of analysis, which needs good understanding of the data, as well as the existing literature and vocabulary on the topic. It is noted that coding and analysis of qualitative data can be unavoidably influenced by biases, assumptions, patterns of thinking, and knowledge gained from experience and reading of a researcher (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Consequently, this can prevent the identification of important aspects of the data. This tendency can also be an obstacle in “moving from descriptive to theoretical levels of analysis” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p.95); however, all efforts should be made to maintain objectivity, e.g. through applying criticality and using participants quotations to support interpretation, which practices were followed in the current study.

Analysis for this research started at the data collection stage. I listened to the recorded interviews and wrote a summary of my reflections for each participant immediately after conducting the interview. However, for more rigorous analysis, it is suggested to transcribe the data verbatim, which occurred as described below.

3.7.2.1 Transcribing Data

Transcription helps in bringing the researcher close to the data and in undertaking deep analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). It is recommended that the researcher him/herself transcribes the interviews (Johnson, 2011). Despite transcription being a time-consuming and tedious process, transcribing one's own interviews helps in becoming more familiar with data interpretation and analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2008). It also offers an opportunity to reflect on the interview process, in particular on types and ways of asking questions (Cohen et al., 2011). Therefore, through the transcription process, a researcher becomes "immersed" in the data (Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge, 2007, p.25) and can become even more familiar with the content through reading and rereading the interview transcripts thoroughly several times (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Moreover, outsourcing transcription work requires funds, raises ethical concerns and, more importantly, a researcher may not have an opportunity to listen to and reflect on the data.

The level of transcription detail depends on the objective of the analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). For example, as compared to thematic analysis, conversational analysis requires greater details, for example including pauses, turn taking, voice pitch, etc. Since this research used thematic analysis, only the spoken words of the interviewees were transcribed. I did not normally transcribe pauses, unless it seemed as if the interviewee was searching for a relevant/accurate word or structure. An example of some parts of one transcribed interview is in Appendix L.

I transcribed all 36 interviews myself, so I had a chance to engage with my data very well. Out of these 36 interviews, 24 were given in English, nine in Arabic, while three interviews used a mix of both English and Arabic. I transcribed all these interviews in the manner they were recorded, without translating, to avoid losing the meaning intended by the interviewees. To carry out a “member check” (Birt et al., 2016) of the transcribed data, the participants were given access to their transcribed interviews. All of them were happy with the transcriptions and agreed they could be used without any amendments.

3.7.2.2 Coding Data

The data in the interview transcriptions then had to be coded. Coding means labelling a meaningful chunk of the data (Saldaña, 2013). This “meaningful chunk” can be a few words in a sentence or a whole paragraph or more than one paragraph. The decision about a “chunk” of data being “meaningful” is entirely dependent on the researcher who codes the data. These decisions are influenced by research questions and the aim of the analysis. To avoid losing intended meanings of the participants, I attempted to use participants’ spoken words, which is called “in vivo” coding.

Coding assists in reducing and organising the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and can be done manually or using computer assisted software such as NVivo and ATLAS.ti. This software has many advantages including the capability to store large amount of qualitative data electronically, coding data systematically, and retrieving it. However, Saldaña (2013) claims that a new researcher might feel confused in learning different features of the software, rather than actually using his/her cognitive abilities to analyse the data. I started coding my data using NVivo; however, later I realised that this software cannot be used with Arabic. My second choice was to use ATLAS.ti as it is capable of handling Arabic transcriptions. Because technical support is not provided by the University for ATLAS.ti, I initially taught myself and then asked other PhD students

for help. As suggested by Ritchie and Lewis (2003), I used ATLAS.ti software as an aid in analysing the data, rather than considering it as a replacement for my own intellectual input. I was also afraid of deleting all my files with just one click, so I kept a backup file in my laptop and updated it every day.

For coding, an open approach was adopted and effort made to avoid making assumptions about the meaning and imposing any pre-existing codes. I must mention that, in practice, the coding process could be influenced by a review of existing literature. The important point here is that each code should be carefully and thoughtfully ascribed instead of jumping to quick conclusions about what is being described in an account within the text (Bryman, 2012). It is about being reflexive and aware of one's own assumptions and being critical of oneself, which is not only helpful in initial coding but also in later stages as the initial codes may be changed, when new ones are added. A researcher needs to keep a record or a log of the decisions s/he makes during this process. This record can aid the researcher in being reflexive as well as enhance the credibility of the data analysis process. For example, a researcher may record how many codes were identified initially, and the number and list of final codes. Therefore, after analysing the first transcript, I had 104 codes; however, after the second and third transcripts, this rose to 117. This means that I had an open approach, rather than imposing existing codes on new data, or trying to fit data into existing codes.

As I was working through the data, I added my analytical comments, thoughts and memos, which sometimes consisted of questions to be further explored, the importance of the code for developing a theme and any methodological issues arising. A sample of the coded transcript is given in Appendix M.

3.7.2.3 Identifying the Themes

After coding the data, and finalising the codes, the next step was to identify broader

concepts or themes, which could be derived from the codes. Similar codes are grouped together under an umbrella concept or theme, which can be further divided into sub-themes. The themes and sub-themes should have coherence in terms of meanings they represent (Saldaña, 2013). For example, in this study, different codes related to different hindrances for HoDs to achieve quality under an umbrella theme “Barriers”, with sub-themes such as “Staffing Issues”, “Limited Support” or “Lack of Teamwork” were used. Initially, I identified 196 codes and printed these out from ATLAS.ti for further reflections. After further scrutiny and refinement, these initial codes were reduced to 146 codes. A list of final codes is attached in Appendix N. The interview schedule clearly worked well because the transcripts contained only a small amount of irrelevant (i.e. uncodable) data. Identification of all the themes was guided by the research questions, as well as emergent patterns from the data.

To ensure that the analysis was rigorous, as suggested by Richards (2005), all themes relevant to the research questions and aims were identified. Furthermore, deviant or contradictory evidence (see the need for pre-role training example in Chapter 6) was actively sought, as this is a valuable way of checking the credibility of qualitative data (Antin et al., 2015).

Overall, during the analysis process, an inductive approach was used and interpretations were drawn from the data collected through the research process (Hartas, 2010). While an effort was made not to impose existing theories or concepts, raw information was not discarded. Inductive approaches are helpful in understanding meanings of complex data through the summary of raw data. These approaches allow research findings to emerge from the raw information in the form of frequently evolving themes grounded in the data (Thomas, 2006). I attempted to be comprehensive and systemic in my analysis, for example, through compiling a variety of data on perceptions, approaches and

professional experience into a table in order to perform an in-depth analysis and avoid presenting only simple quotes from participants (see Appendix O).

3.7.2.4 Presenting the Findings

While reporting the findings from inductive analysis, it is suggested that the researcher should present the main themes as the main headings, and then sub-themes with sub-headings (Thomas, 2006). Thus, findings have been presented thematically, keeping in mind the need to address the research questions. Under each theme, I have written an analytical text comprising of my interpretation of the data, and supported my understanding by giving illustrative quotes from the participants' transcripts. These quotes were selected on the basis of their potential in illustrating the point being made, rather than being representative of all the quotes in the theme. I have attempted to provide good links between themes. The richness of the responses varied from one informant to another depending on the clarity of the interviewee and their ability to explain their own experience. Therefore, some interviewees were more informative than others and provided richer and more extensive data on the subject. It is acknowledged that certain participants are frequently quoted, yet where this happens, their views and sentiments are heavily endorsed by other interviewees, whose language is less eloquent or not as clear and compelling. Any emphasis in this respect does not imply that others' views have been ignored.

In order to offer a higher level of anonymity to the participants, minimal biographical details of the participants (such as their colleges affiliation but not their respective departments or their actual names) have been revealed. Therefore, I have cited quotes with a code that indicates the participant's broad position and interview order (e.g. HoD 9, HQU 2, DDQM 8). I also strove to remove any data that could compromise the anonymity of the participants. Whilst participants in the interviews were male and female,

the data analysis revealed no significant differences relating to gender, so this has not been highlighted. The findings are organised according to the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data, and arranged so that the research questions can be addressed in turn. Wherever possible, the exact number of participants who voiced similar perspectives is given, but in some instances the figures do not add up exactly because of ambivalences or self-contradictions expressed by some interviewees. This presentation of numbers has helped in minimising ambiguity and researcher bias. I have also compared the findings with literature as often as I could in order to provide a solid theoretical basis for my argument.

3.7.3 Translation of Research Instruments

In order to achieve comfortable communication with all participants, the online questionnaire and the interviews schedules were initially developed in English and after careful reviewing were translated into Arabic. In the questionnaire, the English and Arabic versions were presented in the same line to make it easy for the respondents to use their preferred language. Consequently, the risk of misinterpreting any term or statement due to a language barrier was reduced (See Appendix C). Since the majority of the interviewees had a good level of English, I asked them for their preferred language before conducting the interview; therefore, the translated interviews schedules were helpful in smoothing these processes for me as the researcher and the interviewees.

In order to validate the translation, I first translated the questionnaire and the interview schedules in their various versions from English to Arabic and then had it checked by a professional translator who suggested minor corrections to the use of particular words to appropriately communicate the intended meaning of the questions. The translated versions were also sent to the Translation Department at Al-Jawda University, where quality and appropriateness were confirmed.

In the interviews data, there were nine interviews in Arabic and three were carried out in a combination of English and Arabic. I did not translate all of the Arabic data, just relevant quotes that I intended to use in the findings chapters. My own translation of the Arabic original was reviewed by a bilingual research assistant, who upheld the confidentiality of the process (see an example of the translated quotes in Appendix P).

In general, the translation procedures were challenging because I had to search for less ambiguous/confusing Arabic words for the research tools and look for the most appropriate English translation for the participants' Arabic transcripts.

3.8 Trustworthiness of the Research

It is important that the research process is carried out and explained in a way that other researchers can replicate the results with similar participants in another context (Bush, 2012). Bryman (2008) argues that findings from qualitative research can assist in researching other similar contexts, as results can then be compared. Therefore, it is essential for researchers to provide details about what they have done in their cases to aid readers to decide about the appropriateness of the described case to their own case or setting (Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge, 2007). Since the aim of this research was to explore and understand how HoDs in an elite Saudi university endeavour to achieve the desired quality, the findings may well transfer to other prestigious universities that are at the forefront of QA in KSA and set an example for other aspiring HEIs. They may, though, be of less relevance to other countries, especially those with a long-established tradition of QA and/or a very different way of appointing university HoDs. So, the reader can make an informed judgement about the transferability of the case study, I have provided a detailed description of the research process, including the research environment, research analysis and research findings with quotes from the data. This should aid interested readers and researchers to decide upon the transferability of my

research results to their contexts.

Triangulation, using more than one source and method of data collection, was used to enhance the credibility of the research (Cohen et al., 2011; Bryman, 2012). Thomas (2006) notes that the trustworthiness of qualitative research can be increased by triangulating data collection methods and obtaining feedback on the findings from research participants. In this research, I used two data collection tools (an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews). I used the questionnaires to supplement the interviewee data, especially in relation to identifying how HoDs define quality in HE and recognise the factors that hinder and facilitate quality achievement in their respective departments. I also achieved participant triangulation since I interviewed a range of academics occupying different positions at Al-Jawda University. Moreover, before conducting the main study, the questionnaire and the interviews tools were piloted with 20 respondents and four interviewees.

Another way of increasing the credibility of qualitative research is through keeping a record of the fieldwork. I kept all records of my data collection and analysis process along with records of e-mails and other documentation used for gaining ethical clearance, negotiating access to Al-Jawda University and the participants. I recorded most of the interviews digitally and verbatim.

To address trustworthiness Bassey (1999) identifies ways to increase the trustworthiness of a case study research. These questions include:

- a) framing research question as an issue, problem or hypothesis,
- b) abiding by recognised ethical guidelines,
- c) using more than one method of data collection,
- d) spending prolonged time in the field,
- e) analysing data and reaching conclusions after careful consideration of data from

various sources,

- f) gaining critical feedback from colleagues and giving enough details in the presentation of the findings to help audit trailing of the process.

In line with Bassey (1999), I identified that Saudi HE quality achievement is problematic and needs further understanding and redressal. Moreover, I tried to ensure trustworthiness in this study by spending almost a year interacting with the research site. The data collection process was divided into three stages.

Stage 1: Data collection through online questionnaires, which allowed identification of salient features related to HoDs and quality achievement at Al-Jawda University

Stage 2: Development of an interview guide for semi-structured interviews with the participants based on data from the online questionnaire

- g) Stage 3: Use of semi-structured interviewing and probing to thoroughly understand the role of HoDs in achieving quality.

Moreover, my supervisor acted as a critical reviewer in the whole processes of research and its final outcomes. I also presented my study at five conferences at different stages of the research process, where I received good feedback, which contributed towards enhancing the credibility of the research.

3.8.1 Positionality

The issue of the researcher being an insider/outsider is also important in the discussion of trustworthiness. Whether insider/outsider, each positionality has pros and cons for the research process as well as its findings, and its significance also varies according to the context and purpose of the research (Hammersley, 1993). In terms of cultural norms

and linguistic background, I consider myself an insider to the context where I conducted my research. However, I am not currently involved in quality achievement or Saudi HE, in addition to being out of the country and studying abroad. Furthermore, it was an unusual step for a Saudi female to interview men and this would not be considered the action of an insider. Consequently, I considered myself an outsider with reference to my participants, which may have encouraged them to share data openly.

I must acknowledge the advantages and disadvantages of my inconsistent position. Although it is believed that an insider can have easier access to participants and that data collection demands less time (Mercer, 2007), in this study it was not necessarily the case, as accessing some participants involved the support of key figures in Al-Jawda University, i.e. the Rectorate for Development and Quality. It is also suggested that insiders have a stronger rapport with their participants (Mercer, 2007), and I believe that my familiarity with the educational context did enable me to understand the issues, thereby creating such a rapport. On the other hand, my inability to fully contextualise my findings (Mercer, 2007) was one of the disadvantages of being an outsider.

3.8.2 Reflexivity

It is suggested that a qualitative researcher should have a highly reflexive approach (Bryman, 2012), which implies that the researcher must identify his or her own assumptions about the research and those of the participants. I kept a reflexive journal to note my feelings and impressions during the data collection and the analysis process. Reflexive journals are helpful in many ways (Hart and Bond, 1999). For example, they can provide a chronological record of the research process and could be a means of evaluating the process. I used my reflexive thoughts when presenting the findings, and this also contributed to the credibility of the research as it allowed me to challenge my own views.

While it has been highlighted that qualitative research may be biased due to the role of the researcher in the inquiry and closeness to research participants (Creswell, 1998), the use of interviewing may indeed have influenced the nature of the data collected in this study. However, adherence to a number of procedures including explication of all steps of the research and safeguards for ensuring data integrity such as the use of “member checks” to ensure the data were transcribed accurately helped to address the issue of bias.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines (BERA, 2011) were followed to ensure ethical conduct of the study. These guidelines are generally applicable to the KSA context. Ethical approval (see Appendix A) was obtained from the University of Warwick and permission sought from the selected Saudi university to access the academics involved in the achievement of the QA system. Participation in the research were volunteers and had the right to withdraw at any point. Cultural norms of the KSA were respected, and a dress code corresponding to local cultural norms was observed during the fieldwork.

An information sheet about the study was shared with the participants and written consent was secured. The participants were assured about the confidentiality of the data, which would be protected through appropriate data security measures and through the anonymisation of data when presenting results. The aims and objectives of the research were communicated through the Participants’ Information Sheet, extending assurance that the study would comply with the ethical requirements of BERA. The confidentiality of the participants was ensured through anonymisation of their identities.

3.10 Summary

This chapter has described and justified the research design. It has explained why the study was framed by the interpretivist paradigm and why it adopted the case study approach, further discussing how the findings from this case study may be of value in the wider context of Saudi HE. Transferability is important as it indicates that the research has reliability and validity, but transferability cannot be judged until details of the methods for conducting the research have been clarified. In this study, methodological triangulation was achieved, providing insights into the phenomenon under study through different sources of data. This chapter also explicated the research procedures and analytical approach adopted in this study, thereby ensuring that the research process was detailed enough to allow interested researchers to attempt replication of the study as well as to ascertain whether the study had been conducted in line with best research practices and stringent ethical guidelines. The next chapter will present the results from the study.

Chapter 4

The Role of HoDs in Achieving Departmental Quality

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings based on the data collected through the questionnaires and the semi-structured interviews. It addresses the first research question of the study, which pertains to how HoDs at an elite Saudi University achieve quality within their departments. The chapter also discusses the perceptions of the Heads of Department about their role and their understanding of quality, which is then followed by the discussion of their strategies for achieving quality. The 59 questionnaire respondents were all Saudi national Heads of Department belonging to different colleges and departments. Interviews were conducted with 13 male HoDs and two female Deputy HoDs in a range of disciplines. These were then followed by interviews with 21 other participants (henceforth called “stakeholders”) who play a key role in quality achievement at the university, college and departmental level. Some interviewees used the English word “chairman” to refer to the HoD role but this has been rendered as HoD to achieve consistency and prevent any confusion. The next section provides information on how the HoDs perceive their role.

4.2 HoDs’ Perception of their Role

The data collected from the HoDs showed that they viewed their role in varying ways, with some emphasising supervision and control, and others demonstrating a more laissez-faire approach to the headship of their departments. In other cases, the data shows respondents showcasing a charismatic, inspirational and visionary approach to being an HoD. Thus, for example, HoD 7 saw himself “as a supervisor” of departmental

members. He said he was there “to make sure they are doing their job according to what they have to do”. This contrasts with HoD 12 who said “the HoD is not the boss of the department. He is a facilitator”. When speaking about his work, HoD 12 used words like “co-ordinate”, “facilitate” and “manage”. In a further contrast, HoD 3 clearly distinguished between the kind of supervisory activity described by HoD 7 and what he viewed as true leadership. He commented that:

You are the link between the personnel, the staff in the department, to the college, and then the college is linked to the university. So, you are the leader supposedly, if you have leadership characteristics. Or you are a manager, if you are just managing the place of that department [...] if you are a coward, you cannot be a leader, you can be a manager. You apply laws, but you cannot be a leader. A leader sometimes breaks the law for the benefit of the law - not “break the law” - let us make it “facilitate” [...] There is no fear of mistakes. The manager fears mistakes. They only apply law, according to the law. They are not creative. (HoD 3)

It is clear that HoD 3 differentiates between those who take risks and can be designated as leaders, as opposed to those who carry out instructions. This is an important distinction, as it indicates that the HoD may be in a position to initiate change or may simply choose to follow orders. Much depends on whether they are seen as leaders or managers. As Zaleznik (1977) observes, leaders are differentiated from managers because they have followers, whilst managers tend to supervise others. Hellowell and Hancock (2001) have pointed out that HoDs’ roles boundaries are rather vague, and that their complexity depends on the context of the department. Therefore, some HoDs consider themselves to be performing multiple, complex and sometimes conflicting roles. For example, their role is complicated when they are required to serve as a leader and a manager simultaneously, since as manager they must hold people accountable for their work, yet this process may damage their existing interpersonal relationships. In contrast,

the role of a leader is to inspire and motivate his/her followers, and this aim is best met in healthy interpersonal relationships.

4.2.1. Responsibilities

4.2.1.1 HoD Job Description at Al-Jawda University

According to a document published by the Vice-Rectorate for Quality and Development at Al-Jawda University, the job description for a University HoD¹⁰ states that they are faculty members with academic, administrative and financial responsibilities. They are also responsible for the implementation of the rules and regulations of the HEI Council, while providing reports about departments to College Deans at the end of each academic year. An HoD is appointed on a renewable two-year contract from amongst the Saudi academics and should have outstanding qualifications in both academic and administrative areas. This decision is taken by the University Rector, based on the nominations by a College Dean. The HoDs at the university report to a College Dean and have a number of key responsibilities as outlined below:

1. Administrative and financial responsibilities:
 - a) Heading a Department Council and supervising its affairs, giving invitations to attend its sessions, implementing its decisions and sending the notes of these meetings to a College Dean;
 - b) Achieving the mission, vision and strategic policies within the University;
 - c) Implementing the decisions of the College Council, regarding their respective departments;
 - d) Supervising the strategic plans of a department and monitoring its implementation;

¹⁰ Author's translation

- e) Supervising the academic, research, administrative, financial and cultural affairs of a department;
- f) Supervising the development of a department administratively, academically and in terms of research;
- g) Organising and developing the internal and external relations of a department;
- h) Supervising and ensuring the availability of all programme needs in terms of academic, administrative, research and financial issues;
- i) Supervising the enhancement of the quality levels and improving outcomes;
- j) Implementing and checking on the decisions of the Departmental Council;
- k) Performing duties delegated to HoDs by the College Dean;
- l) Submitting and communicating to the College Dean all the issues that may arise in connection to the academic staff and/or any irregularities;
- m) Providing a report about the progress of the postgraduate studies¹¹ in a department to a College Dean and the Dean of the Graduate Studies at the end of every academic year;

2. Academic affairs:

- a) Presenting a report about the academic progress of sponsored students, whether they are within the KSA and under the auspices of a department, to the College Council;
- b) Supervising the performance of academic processes and implementing plans and developing programmes within a department;

¹¹ post-graduate studies at the Master's level in the KSA last up to three years

- c) Implementing quality systems, regulations, assessment and academic accreditation;
- d) Supervising different student activities within a department;
- e) Supervising examinations and controlling behaviour within a department.
- f) Supervising the process of academic development for the department's programmes;
- g) Preparing and submitting to the College Dean an overall annual report about the progress of education and academic, research, administrative, and financial matters;
- h) Supervising the recruitment of non-Saudi staff members in a department;
- i) Submitting a report from the Research Committee of viva voce to the Dean of Graduate Studies within a period that does not exceed three weeks from the viva date;
- j) Suggesting external academics, other than internal academics, to prepare examination questions for final exams when needed;

3. Authorities:

- a) Recommending that marking of final examinations is done by a member of academic staff different from the designated academics, or involving other academics in the marking process in addition to the designated academics;
- b) Ratifying transcript;
- c) Issuing internal decisions that are necessitated for the good performance of a department, according to the regulations and accords outlined;
- d) Distributing the teaching load amongst the academics;
- e) Recommending allocation of overtime work for departmental members;

- f) Recommending the disbursement of financial compensation for additional teaching and overtime work;
- g) Preparing reports of job performance for academics;
- h) Recommending the attendance of departmental academics at training sessions, both within the University and externally;
- i) Communicating with the training and scholarships committee regarding checking on the status and circumstances of scholars and trainees;
- j) Recommending contract extensions and official permanent contractual agreements for Saudi academics on temporary contracts;
- k) Recommending the termination of contracts for non-Saudi academics;
- l) Ratifying reports prepared by supervisors for dissertations and sending a copy to the Dean of Graduate Studies at the end of each semester.

Although at first glance the document seems prescriptive, detailed information on HoDs role was elicited from the participating HoDs.

4.2.1.2 HoDs' Perception of their Role

It was found that HoDs' daily performance was largely congruent with the above job description, involving them in a wide range of responsibilities, ranging from long-term strategic planning to regular departmental administrative activities. There was no suggestion in the data that the responsibilities of male HoDs and female Deputy HoDs were different. In strategic terms, HoDs are responsible for developing and submitting departmental plans to the relevant Dean at the start of each academic year. These plans outline departmental goals for the whole year, including quality targets, and strategies to achieve them. It is crucial that the departmental strategy is aligned with the strategy of the respective college, as well as the overall strategy of the university.

Additionally, HoDs spoke of performing several administrative roles, such as scheduling courses, allocating classrooms, and overseeing the accreditation of work. Other tasks included ensuring tests were standardised and running on time, ensuring academics cover the syllabus, assigning course co-ordinators for different courses, developing new programmes, and encouraging the use of modern technologies for teaching. Another important responsibility was student pastoral support and creating a conducive environment so that both academics and students can achieve the best learning outcomes. This area of responsibility was highlighted by Bolden et al. (2008) but, in contrast with their findings, there was no suggestion in this study that pastoral support was under-appreciated.

In addition to routine tasks, further responsibilities include “developing course specifications, updating some programmes where the turnout had been low, initiating new programmes, updating the vision and values of the department and benchmarking it” (HoD 10). HoDs are also expected to represent their department at monthly College Council meetings and to vote on various issues. Further duties include chairing the DQC, achieving departmental accreditation, and encouraging high quality research. HoD 8 highlighted these roles:

I'm in charge of the DQC, it's a major task for me to concentrate on achieving quality and accreditation [...] I also follow-up the research projects going on in the department either with the academics or with the postgraduate students [...] we are enhancing and motivating our postgraduate students to do projects and at the end, publishing these in ISI journals with high impact factors.

Although it is the formal responsibility of HoDs to motivate academics and doctoral students to undertake high quality research, the HoDs from natural sciences described academics and students as highly-motivated researchers, who did not need much help from an HoD. For instance, HoD 11 observed that:

Most of the academics prefer scientific research to teaching [...] thus, the HoD does not need to worry about that aspect. My colleagues are already motivated enough, given the incentives.

Such incentives include financial rewards for research outputs. HoD 3 explained how Al-Jawda University facilitates their research activities:

As a researcher, I get bonus money in my salary every month because I have an ISI [Institute for Scientific Information] publication. This is the university system. So, people are working because there are benefits. This is quality!

Another responsibility for HoDs is related to teaching. The CoHE (1998) regulations require HoDs to have at least three contact hours per week, but not many of the interviewees referred to this aspect of their role. It may be the case that participants assumed that as a researcher from the same culture, I would have been aware of the default teaching role. Or, it may be that heavy involvement in administrative tasks interfered with participants' recollections of their teaching activities. However, the teaching role of HoDs is clearly evident from the quantitative data. In the questionnaire, HoDs were asked to say approximately how many hours per week they spend on teaching, research and administration. From Table 6 it is evident that most respondent HoDs (75%) devoted more than nine hours per week to administrative tasks, while many of them (48%) teach up to six hours per week. Additionally, they commit up to six hours to research activities (34%). This suggests that quantitative and qualitative data align to support the fact that HoDs are heavily involved in administrative tasks and the majority of them teach up to 6 hours per week. With regard to research activity, although more than a third of HoDs spend between three and six hours on research-related tasks, from the interviews it was clear that the time available for research was considered by HoDs as insufficient. As a point of comparison, the Saudi HoDs performed almost all the same duties as their UK counterparts (as listed by Sotirakou, 2004), with the exception of

applying for external funding, as all Saudi HEIs are fully funded by the MoHE. Similarly, Bryman's (2007) review highlighted securing resources and professional development for academics as some of the key aspects of the HoDs' role, which has not been confirmed by the HoDs in this study.

It can therefore be seen that all of these findings strongly align with existing literature on the significance of HoDs' role, for example, where Juhl and Christensen (2008) defined three functions (institutional, academic and administrative) as being key to the role. They also reflect Sotirakou's (2004) description of the multi-dimensionality of an HoD's role, highlighting the variations that an HoD is expected to deal with on a daily basis. The institutional function relates more to the management or leadership role in which they are representing the institution, whereas the academic function reflects the teaching role and the overview of the curriculum. To a certain extent, the institutional role could also be applied to the research activities, as these are ultimately for the benefit and reputation of the institution.

Table 6: HoDs' Responsibilities and Activities (hours per week)

Element Hours	Up to 3 hours	3-6 hours	6-9 hours	More than 9 hours	Rank
Administration	1	5	9	44	1
	2%	9%	15%	75%	
Research	25	20	8	6	2
	42%	34%	14%	10%	
Teaching	22	28	5	2	3
	37%	48%	9%	7%	

Furthermore, HoDs were asked to rank the importance of twelve factors/elements that aid achieving quality in HE; answers were scored on a five-point scale (5 = extremely important, 1 = not important at all). As shown in Table 7 (below), all the listed elements

were deemed important although some items were seen as more important than others. The most highly ranked element in the achievement of quality was found to be “The capacity of the institution to improve continuously through the empowerment and enhancement of all involved” 98% (58) followed by “Providing education and services that meet the needs and expectations of students” 97% (57). A close third was “Quality of teaching” 95% (56) whereas the fourth and fifth elements were “Preparing graduates who will meet the society expectations” 95% (56) and “Preparing graduates who will meet the requirements of employers” 92% (54). Qualitative data (see Section 4.3) confirmed that for HoDs quality is linked to graduate employability. Notably, the HoDs also ranked quality of research as a distant eighth.

Table 7: Elements Important for Achieving Quality in HE

Element \ Rank	1	2	3	4	5	Total (4+5)	Rank
The capacity of the institution to improve continuously through the empowerment and enhancement of all involved		1		22	36	58	1
		2%		37%	61%	98%	
Providing education and services that meet the needs and expectations of students			2	15	42	57	2
			3%	25%	71%	97%	
Quality of teaching	1		2	6	50	56	3
	2%		3%	10%	85%	95%	
Preparing graduates who will meet the society expectations	1		2	14	42	56	4
	2%		3%	24%	71%	95%	
Preparing graduates who will meet the requirements of employers		2	3	12	42	54	5
		3%	5%	20%	71%	92%	
The transformative capacity of the institution			5	19	35	54	6
			9%	32%	59%	92%	
The ability of the institution to be effective			5	21	33	54	7
			9%	36%	56%	92%	
Quality of research		1	7	12	39	51	8
		2%	12%	20%	66%	86%	
Reputation of the institution within the national community		1	8	22	28	50	9
		2%	14%	37%	48%	85%	
Reputation of the institution at international level			9	23	27	50	10
			15%	39%	46%	85%	
Providing education that meets specified objectives and national standards		1	10	15	33	48	11
		2%	17%	25%	56%	81%	
Achieving consistency in internal processes e.g. appointment of HoDs should have the same criteria across all the departments/ colleges	1	5	11	15	27	42	12
	2%	9%	19%	25%	46%	71%	

There was a common belief among HoDs and stakeholders that HoDs played a “major” role in quality achievement. As HoD 5 put it, “quality is one of my most important

responsibilities in the department. I am number one in charge of quality”. Almost all the stakeholders were aware of the HoDs’ important role in achieving quality and accreditation in their departments. The former Rector, for instance, observed that “the most important position at the university is the HoD and, if you have distinguished HoDs, you can have an excellent university”. This was a sentiment shared by all stakeholders, who saw HoDs as crucial to quality achievement because of their involvement in multiple tasks related to administration, supervision and leadership. Agreeing with the HoDs findings, DDQM 6 comprehensively outlined the HoD role in quality-related activities:

An HoD supervises the DQC [Departmental Quality Committee]; he supervises and follows up the implementation of the QMS [Quality Management System] within the department or within the academic programmes under the umbrella of his department. He also ensures the completion of course specifications, course reports, programme specifications, programme reports. He discusses the results of the questionnaires given to students, for academics and other stakeholders like employers and parents and so on. So, the HoD has an essential role regarding quality.

This focus on quality achievement stems from the expectations of the role as expressed by more senior academics such as the deans who work directly with them, and who expect them to “look after their students, their classes and the financial and administrative issues” (Dean 3). Dean 1 considered HoDs as “the main factor who keeps an eye on implementation of quality management”, and Dean 2 said that HoDs are “responsible to the Dean for ensuring that all the policy and procedures on quality were implemented”. In addition to the deans, HQU 4 added that HoDs are expected to “release the value of quality and empower their staff, and to satisfy and fulfil the quality requirements”. In line with Smith (2007), the participants themselves pointed out HoDs serve as intermediaries between students, academics and senior leadership since they interpret policies (Jones, 2011) and implement quality. Therefore, HoDs’ effectiveness is

directly linked to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning (Knight and Trowler, 2000). The next section presents the findings related to how HoDs define quality.

4.3 HoDs' Perceptions of Quality

As previously noted, how a person behaves in relation to QA depends, in part, upon how they perceive quality (Cruickshank, 2003; Houston, 2008; Kleijnen et al., 2014). Dos Santos Martins et al, (2013) and Vukasovic (2014) suggest that perceptions of quality differ by academic discipline, and that consequently, different disciplines require different approaches to QA (Vukasovic, 2014), for instance equipment/labs are the major aspect for determining quality in engineering departments (Dos Santos Martins et al., 2013). Such a link between facilities and standards of quality may be of less significance in other disciplines with a more theoretical focus. Similar support was found in this study in the comment of HoD 12Hlth¹²:

We cannot set one standard for the college. The university gives us opportunities in the department to set our own standards of quality with regard to our disciplines.

In light of this, it is not surprising that there are different perceptions about what quality involves. HoD 10Hum declared: "quality means following procedures" while HoD 3Sci said it was about careful planning and on-going evaluation because "quality is about doing something through a known system". HoD 6Hum links quality to regulation/regimentation, respect for rules, and the avoidance of stochastic irregularity that can be counter-productive in terms of quality:

Quality is about self-discipline, which means working at the highest level at no additional cost. This means being organised

¹² Since disciplinary differences are key to this subsection, the following departmental codes have been used: Comm – College of Community, Hlth – College of Health, Hum – College of Humanities, Sci – College of Science

and managing time effectively. Transparency and sincerity need to be at their best, both personally and professionally, and respect for the organisation and its rule is important. It is for this reason that I wish that we had more discipline, for example, using the secretary's computer when you have a computer of your own, shows a lack of discipline, control and respect, and it shows stochastic recklessness. This is against quality because quality is against stochasticity. (HoD 6)

Nevertheless, some HoDs said it was about creating a culture within the organisation. Seven of the HoDs emphasised that quality was not about paying lip service or achieving instrumental goals. For instance, a typical response was that it was about creating “a culture of change and improvement” (HoD 4Hum) and recognising that “quality is a behaviour and a culture in any organisation, not only a slogan” (HoD 13Sci). QA then becomes an integral part of HE rather than an add-on. This may be more difficult to achieve, as Alghamdi (2016) has shown in his study that academics in Saudi HE are resistant to change. Creating a quality culture requires transformation of all involved (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2007; Cardoso et al., 2015) and integrating such a culture is achieved through consensus. Whilst there is resistance, there needs to be more focus on small improvements. Kleijnen et al (2014) found in effective departments where quality was part of the culture, continuous improvement was regarded as a key quality indicator. Moreover, graduate employability and future performance in the workplace are key indicators of quality for the majority of HoDs in science and technical colleges, such as engineering, agriculture, and computer science. HoD 3Sci spoke of measuring student success by whether graduates are “working right away”. Similarly, HoDs 11 and 13 stated:

Quality, especially when it comes to our department, is when the graduate himself is of a high quality - we aim to educate him sufficiently that will qualify him to take on responsibility, be efficient, and contribute to national development whether he is employed in the public or private sector. (HoD 11Sci)

For me, real quality is when the private sector starts competing to employ our students and when they provide us with feedback regarding their future needs. (HoD 13Sci)

HoDs 3, 13 and 11 clearly equated quality with graduate employment, and in so doing, they support Veugelers and Del Rey (2014) contention that HE should be a means of increasing employability and thus national productivity. Of course, in reality, the number of graduate students finding jobs is not dependent entirely on teaching and learning quality, it also influenced by economic factors (for example, the economic environment of the country), which is beyond the university's control.

By contrast, HoDs in the College of Humanities generally believed the main aim of teaching and learning was to develop the moral consciousness of their students. This concurs with the work of Anderson (2009) wherein it is argued that HE is more about developing students as moral citizens and graduates, who can lead fulfilled lives and discharge their moral duties in society without reward. Only one of them (HoD 15) made reference to graduate employability. She said, “basically, quality means when our students graduate, they’ll be able to go into the market place and get jobs that will, of course, improve the community altogether”. As job opportunities for Saudi women are quite limited, it is doubly surprising that a female HoD in the College of Humanities linked quality to the labour market.

According to some of the HoDs and in line with Henkel (2005) and Veiga and Sarrico (2014), quality is also understood in terms of efficiency and distinctiveness. For example, HoD 5Sci viewed quality as achieving personal goals “in an efficient and effective manner, or in the most excellent way [...] to be distinguished, to be different from other schools or departments”. Such an understanding suggests that quality helps to minimise waste of resources and maximise the opportunity to achieve departmental goals. According to him, quality is increased by benchmarking different academic departments,

and creating a culture of competition among HoDs. He was unequivocal in asserting that:

This department is recognised because it achieved quality. So, after this announcement, they recognised us at the university level, not at the college level. This affected other departments and put them under pressure. So, creating competition is vital to achieving quality. (HoD 5)

Other HoDs also stated that acknowledging and celebrating their departmental success in terms of quality acted as an inspiration to staff and created a spirit of competition among different departments within a college, thereby encouraging them all to work towards quality goals.

Similarly, a few stakeholders asserted that healthy competition among HoDs leads to better quality outcomes. Indeed, they noted that a college dean could develop this competition by reviewing the performance of each department in quality terms during the meetings of the College Council, and by showing appreciation of those HoDs who had demonstrated good performance. It was believed that when “there will be a competition, he [underperforming HoD] will be motivated to do it [achieve quality]” (Dean 1).

Despite these assertions, evidence in the literature is mixed. On the one hand, Saltmarsh (2011) argues that universities now operate in an internationally competitive environment and therefore need to show consistent excellence in everything they do. On the other, Li and Mae (2016) argue that competition does not have much effect on the choice of educational establishment. Students tend to enrol at the most convenient university for their personal needs, rather than to make a decision based on one establishment being better than another. There is also the concern that too much competition can impact on the quality of education services, reducing institutional diversity and damaging wider participation (Alani et al., 2015). Encouraging competition among departments in Al-

Jawda University is a controversial idea because it cuts across one of the fundamental tenets of what it means to be a university. Arguably, there are some less competitive disciplines, such as philosophy or education that should be supported because they have an inherent worth even though they may have lower student enrolments or employment rates than subjects such as business.

Moreover, there was agreement that certain standards should be met. Seven HoDs viewed quality simply as the achievement of these standards. HoDs 14Hum and 15Hum from the female campus interpreted quality in terms of achieving world-class standards and maintaining good teaching quality. In the view of HoD 14Hum “quality is about ensuring that you are doing your job to the best possible standards” while HoD 15Hum understood quality to mean “having a certain level, a high level of academia basically”. HoD 8Hlth further defined quality as achieving the highest standards with the support of colleagues and students.

Adding to the views of HoDs, the former Rector believed quality to be about “developing and transforming students and the whole education process”, Dean 1 confirmed quality as “keeping things in the right direction”, while a Vice-Rector commented that “the introduction of quality made us sit at the same table and discuss the same matters, we hardly used to speak to each other before implementing quality”. The former Rector added that quality “made us move from education to learning and from employment to empowerment”. He further clarified the differences between education, learning, employment and empowerment:

What is the difference between education and learning? With learning, the input of the teacher is reduced from 100% to 30%, with 70% going to the student. In the end, we have an independent learner while with education the teacher is the only speaker and thus there is only one interactive element. Moreover, education focuses on building knowledge, while learning is based on building skills. Learning is about identifying the suitable skill for each age and ability category. Employment

is a social security and empowerment is to prepare students for the global market and not only for the local market in Saudi Arabia. (Former Rector)

The evidence suggests that HoDs interpret quality in a variety of ways and that their views are informed by the nature of the department in which they work. Students' learning outcomes and their potential employability were seen by HoDs in the Science Colleges as the main indicators of quality, whereas the majority of HoDs from the Humanities Colleges did not make this connection. Most of the HoDs assumed that high quality resulted from closely following university systems and from careful planning and evaluation.

In the next section the HoDs discuss the techniques they use to ensure quality in their departments.

4.4 HoDs' Strategies to Achieve Quality

4.4.1 Approaches to Quality: Compliance, Consistency and Culture

In order to perform their critical role in QA, HoDs took three complementary approaches: compliance, consistency and culture (Cardoso et al., 2015). The first one, compliance, refers to achieving pre-specified standards and meeting the requirements of national and/or international accreditation bodies. According to a previous study (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013) and the majority of HoDs in this study, this was the most prevalent of the three approaches. The compliance-oriented culture is traditionally prevalent in Saudi HE. In this approach, HoDs "supervise the whole process of achieving quality through DQC and make sure that staff fill in the forms on time according to quality standards requirements" (HoD 7). Eight HoDs believe that the

implementation of quality standards is the fundamental step in achieving quality. This helps a department to achieve national and international accreditation, which is ultimately a major element in ensuring departmental quality.

In line with HoDs, the stakeholders identified various approaches, which HoDs use to achieve and cultivate quality in their departments. They too considered achieving accreditation as an initial approach to achieve quality. Indeed, the former Rector said that Al-Jawda University “cannot compete globally with no global accreditation”. Additionally, accreditation provides a structured way of working and helps in improving departmental performance, as indicated by a Vice-Dean who said “our performance after getting accreditation is quite different than before. We improved a lot in terms of quality”. Nevertheless, accreditation is not without its critics. Although Kleijnen et al. (2011) conclude it improves quality, Morrish and Sauntson (2016) suggest that the bureaucracy involved has a detrimental effect on academic freedoms; they argue that this can hinder quality achievement, and that appears to be the view of some of the participants as well. This may of course be due to a lack of understanding of the role of accreditation in the whole QA process.

In addition to the above, HoDs indicated that “the more people understand this quality, the more they believe in it, and the better they perform in general” (HoD 14). Stakeholders also emphasised that academics should be aware of the rationale for completing the quality-related documentation, and how this improves their own performance. They argued that understanding the benefits of quality motivates people to work towards its achievement. In the view of DDQM 1, “if they [HoDs] tell them [staff] what quality can do for them and their job and their product, I am sure that they will be keener than me in applying quality”. HQU 1 added weight to this argument, saying:

People need to know why it is required to fill in these forms;
they should know the process ultimately helps them to work in

a better way [...] because when they complete a course report, it is for their benefit, for documenting their work, and whatever problems they reveal within the reports will be solved by the department [...] because when people do not know, they are going to resist anything new. Therefore, the HoD should be good at explaining the reasons for quality initiatives, then there might be a chance to get staff on board.

These comments echo the conclusions of Land and Rattray (2014) and Albaqami (2015) in that academics, who are unaware of the benefits of QA, are more likely to resist its implementation.

The second approach is maintaining consistency across academic programmes, levels and administration. Consistency means ensuring that everyone works to the same standards. Faith in quality helps HoDs to genuinely work towards accomplishing it, rather than simply aiming for accreditation, which is not an end in itself but rather a means to achieve a different end, namely good quality of graduates. HoD 7 emphasised that “You should love it and you should believe in it” while HoD 14 argued that a belief in quality and dedication influences daily performance:

I am a person who believes in quality [...] I truly believe that it is not about forms, it is not about accreditation, it is not about how prestigious the university is. Quality is about how you perform every day, and if you do believe in it, this will affect your performance, day in and day out.

Having documented certain approaches used by HoDs to ensure departmental quality, it is appropriate to note that HoDs believe that quality achievement “requires much time and effort” (HoD12). It is “a very hard process”, and “you cannot have quality overnight” (HoD 1). Moreover, “you cannot achieve absolute or perfection in quality” (HoD 14), and “once you get it, you should maintain it” (HoD 9). They suggest that quality achievement is a journey, “a continuous process” (HoD 5) with scope for further improvement.

In line with the HoDs' views, the stakeholders acknowledged that quality achievement is "a long-term process [...] quality is about practice and requires steady improvement" (Dean 2), and should be seen as "continuous" (Vice-Dean), rather than a one-off job. Therefore, "sustainability and continuity of good practices of quality" (DDQM 5) can themselves be beneficial in achieving quality. The former Rector shared that

it is not just 'pass the exam and you will be done', but the enhancement and improvement of quality is a continuous process, not just to prepare for the accreditation or to just do it once or twice, but it has to be done every time as if it were the first time.

The third approach is the development of an enduring culture, which everyone in the department feels obligated to uphold. Seven HoDs mentioned that generating a departmental culture of quality beyond that required by the central administration was the critical step to achieving quality, as well as being part of their role. If there is a culture of quality, all individuals working in a department believe in value and strive for quality achievement more than any other goal. Such a culture can be spread through frequent discussion and attracting experts from accredited global universities. A culture of quality will be reflected in the work ethic of the academics rather than in a focus on paperwork. HoD 12 explained this point by saying:

Part of my work is to enforce what the institute requires; the other part of it is trying to encourage the introduction of quality in the workplace as an ethic or culture in the department.

HoD 4 considered himself enthusiastic about creating a culture of quality and testified to the importance of disseminating this among all staff:

I am passionate about developing a quality culture. In my view, it should be the preoccupation of all members in the department. One of the benchmarks to achieve quality is to spread the culture of quality implementation. Any institution keen on applying quality should begin by spreading a quality culture among staff.

Moreover, six HoDs mentioned the importance of staff buy-in and how their own level of commitment affected this. With regard to the first point, HoD 14 said, “the more staff believe in quality, the easier the implementation process will be, and the smoother quality achievement will be”. In terms of the second point, HoD 10 said, “because I believe in quality, I was able to convince my staff of its importance.” There is no doubt that it is important for staff to have a good understanding of quality and its value in the institution, as Darandari et al. (2009) argue. Hence, commitment from staff is an essential element, as other studies confirm (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2007; Cardoso et al., 2015). Yet, it is not always easy to convince academics to change (Alghamdi, 2016). It may happen that staff agree in principle but resist in practice. Having a capable leader, who is committed to a quality culture, may be helpful in breaking down such resistance, as the earlier quote from HoD 10 indicates.

The data was interrogated to determine if there was a link between the way a HoD perceived quality and the strategies they adopted to achieve it. Discipline and length of service was also mapped. See appendix O for an example from the College of Health. In most cases, there was a clear link between the HoD’s perception of quality and their strategies for achieving it. For example, those HoDs who referred to culture in their understanding of quality would also mention developing a quality culture as an approach.

In a few cases, HoDs were inconsistent. For example, they said that quality was about following a system but also believed it should be embedded as a culture. Two interviewees were not able to give a clear explanation of what they thought quality was nor articulate approaches for achieving it. Both respondents were newly-appointed. Nonetheless, some strategies employed during the course of their work were reported by almost all HoDs. It seems that these strategies are required by the quality agency and/or

are part of the university strategy/policy. For example, almost all HoDs talked about having strategies to achieve consistency such as the uniformity of course specification and the appointment of a course co-ordinator.

It can be clearly seen that academic discipline makes a difference to quality achievement since it impacts on perception of quality, relates to its outcomes and indirectly influences the choice of approach. Furthermore, it became evident that the longer an HoD has been in the post, the more they tend to be inclined towards the culture approach, whereas less experience in the role drives HoDs towards compliance.

The stakeholders concurred with the HoDs in considering developing a culture of quality among staff as an essential step. DDQM 4 said that if there is “a solid culture of quality, it doesn’t matter, then, who is in charge, actually. Because people will just do things because they know they are valuable and they believe in it”. DDQM 1 highlighted that having a quality culture can facilitate quality achievement:

We should work on disseminating a culture of quality - let’s put it this way; infecting everybody with the virus of quality. Then, the job will be a lot easier for HoDs and for the staff and so on. If you believe in something, then you feel happy doing it, if you don’t believe in it and it’s being forced by the HoD or even the deanship or the dean, I think you will do it hesitantly.

This indicates that an HoD must work carefully to introduce a quality culture, without seeming to force staff to make changes. Consensus is a key priority (Dias et al., 2014) and if a quality culture becomes part of the strategy for the institution, then it is more likely to succeed (Buchanan, 1995).

4.4.2 Working towards Quality

HoDs endeavour to engage academics in achieving quality, through their involvement in the DQC within each academic department. It is the university policy to rotate membership of this committee amongst all academics in a given department. This in line with claims by Harvey and Green (1993) and Darandari and Cardew (2013) that quality achievement is the responsibility of all stakeholders, especially academics who have a central role in delivering education (Ledden et al., 2011). HoD 1 confirmed this, saying “there is not one person in this department that has not worked in the DQC so far”. Some HoDs welcomed this because it provides fresh energy and insight for the committee. Rotating the membership of the DQC provides more academics with opportunities to become “aware of the common glitches, the different aspects of quality” and what is required to achieve it (HoD 4). Furthermore, through actually doing the practical work, the majority of academics become knowledgeable about the “various concepts of quality, its values, what is meant by various quality measures” (HoD 3) such as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and student-to-academics ratio as stated by HoD 12:

This committee, to be fair, is shuffled every semester, keeping the head and the vice-head of the committee the same. But we try to involve as many academics in the DQC as possible. That is part of our policy in trying to disseminate the work on quality amongst academics. And it’s a learning opportunity as well - you are met with the criteria and the requirements. So, they work hands-on, not only quality but in their own work responsibilities, they are also having a taste of how it is, in terms of quality administration or administrating QA. I find involving as many academics as I can in this committee very helpful in achieving quality in the department.

HoD 11 observed that rotation of DQC membership positively influences attitudes and practices of staff and is “really a good idea to spread the culture of quality amongst all the academics”. HoDs further elaborated that this rotation system was helpful in reducing

staff suspicion regarding quality implementation and accreditation processes. HoDs also considered themselves as “part of a quality chain and processes that happen in the department” (HoD 12) through their participation in the DQC. They also stated that “part of the responsibilities is upheld in delivering what is required from the quality regulation standpoint” (HoD 6).

Although HoDs were keen to say how committed they were to QA and how engaged they were with quality-related initiatives, the stakeholders especially those from the Deanship for Development and Quality (DDQ) took a different view. They observed that HoDs see quality-related tasks as “extra work” (DDQM 1) and “HoDs still look at quality as an elective and they look at it as somebody else can do it” (DDQM 2). QDM 6 stated, HoDs “really did not give quality the proper time, or address it as it should be”, and they are “not directly part of it. In most cases, they assign the quality work to the committees” (QDM 3) without proper follow-up and supervision. Hence, “they do not know what is happening” (QDM 7) in daily practices and strategies in relation to quality. This results in delays in submitting the quality-related documentation, and thus in reduced departmental efficiency, as noted by DDQM 4 who said: “if an HoD just receives the consultants, asks them to work with the academics and then expects a good result, the result will not be that effective”. Therefore, “direct involvement in the achievement of quality is mandatory” (DDQM 3). DDQM 5 also illustrated the negative impact of poor HoD involvement in quality-related activities:

If you want HoDs to work for self-assessment that is part of NCAAA requirements, they will form a committee. The committee will be supervised by another senior faculty member advising on quality but in most cases, the HoD under whom the programme is being run is not directly part of it. And quality cannot be achieved unless the HoDs play an active role no matter how effective the academic is [...] if you are not directly involved, you will be receiving 25% of contribution and the work will be delayed. The desired outcomes will not be achieved.

Transparency was advocated as a way to improve quality. Departments were encouraged to publish information on their website, regarding course specifications, assessment criteria, and examination and even past papers. This level of information sharing was thought to prevent a culture of closeness and secrecy, thus promoting an atmosphere of openness that supports quality achievement in a department. HoD 13, for example, said:

I am totally focused on making everything transparent. I do not want any secretive affairs in the department. One of the things from my point of view that will make people improve quality is to stop working behind closed doors. This will ensure clarity and transparency.

HoDs believed that the open communication policy within their departments facilitated the achievement of quality. In this respect, they cited examples of how Al-Jawda University has taken various steps to promote open communication by, for example, making it compulsory for academics including HoDs to develop their webpages with official contact details and giving students and staff email addresses. These strategies remove obstacles to communication between academics and their students and help in enhancing accessibility. Communication between HoDs and their staff has also improved as highlighted by HoD 8:

We are open. Each faculty and student has email contact information. It's mandatory to have your website in the university. So, if anyone wants to access your information, especially students, they can do and this is part of quality. Communication is part of quality.

In addition, a recent technique to maintain quality reported by the stakeholders is the implementation of a local Quality Management System (QMS) in Al-Jawda University. However, this technique was not spoken of by HoDs, which might signify that, as a new initiative, the QMS was not widely implemented among departments. The system is

based on the internationally recognised Malcolm Baldrige¹³ system for accreditation and academic excellence, and aims to maintain performance and quality improvements. This is done by evaluating and scoring the performance of academic programmes, and by internal auditing. In the case of Al-Jawda University, there is a board of assessors who review departmental performance once every two years prior to applying for re-accreditation. The QMS has two phases - self-study, and audit and assessment – which together help in preparing a department to satisfy national audits by the NCAAA, which has higher quality standards and requirements than QMS. DDQM 8 elaborated this benefit of QMS:

If a department successfully implements the QMS, it is on track to achieve NCAAA accreditation because the QMS is based on NCAAA standards themselves [...] So there is no duplication of effort. Actually, if you work towards the QMS, you end up obtaining NCAAA because it's the same standards.

Furthermore, it was stated that implementation of the QMS “encourages HoDs to continuously improve themselves” (HQU 2), “keeps everyone involved in the accreditation process” (DDQM 1), and “reduces a lot of the time and effort in quality management” (DDQM 4). The Vice-Dean highlighted that the QMS is useful to “follow up, maintain delivery of quality or even prove it [...] It's an official way, a military way to maintain your performance”. DDQM 2 unequivocally stated multiple advantages of the system:

The QMS is our tool to maintain quality. Because HoDs are constantly updating their SSR [Self-Study Report], they are constantly working with their KPIs. They are consistently trying to achieve the quality goals. They are consistently implementing

¹³ The **Malcolm Baldrige** is a U.S based quality award in the business, health care, education, and non-profit sectors for performance excellence. The award promotes awareness of performance excellence as an important element in competitiveness.

the action plans [...] Actually, this is what we call a continuous improvement process.

The above quotes from the stakeholders point towards the direction of Hofstede's power distance dimension, according to which Saudi Arabia is a hierarchical society and is therefore classed as a high power distance culture. Hence, the afore-mentioned 'military way' reflects a tendency to enforce, rather than implement, rules and regulations.

4.4.3 Sharing the Burden

The stakeholders did acknowledge that HoDs cannot be directly involved in all the departmental assignments, but nonetheless felt that "quality is not like other work [...] [it] is the supreme task, without which we cannot expect a competent graduate" (DDQM 2), and they believed there should be some HoD monitoring of progress, as elaborated by DDQM 8 who said, "direct involvement does not mean that he's working with the team but a regular feedback that is required from the team would make them feel engaged". Indeed, DDQM 5 suggested that the HoD should request regular updates from the quality team and offer assistance in facilitating their work.

Moreover, the Quality Deanship Members (QDMs) highlighted a lack of ownership amongst HoDs for quality related work. QDM 4, who is an expatriate himself, criticised HoDs' reliance on expatriates, stating, "they hire three expatriates to perform the quality system. This is not what quality is about. Quality must be executed by each of the individual faculty members". He further added "never trust the expatriates because these people one day will go back to their home". They suggested that in order to maintain quality, Al-Jawda University must "train professionals in quality, dedicated from the nationals" (QDM 8) and "quality must be driven by the HoDs and Saudi academics themselves" (QDM 5).

In line with HoDs, the stakeholders also indicated that rotating DQC members and broadening their involvement in the quality process was a good way to achieve departmental quality, and was particularly useful in generating a pool of staff aware of quality issues. HQU 2 raised the need for this, saying:

HoDs try to involve as many academics as possible in the DQC because quality duties should be rotated and divided and it's not appropriate for just one person to do the job for several years since this person may disappear [...] we're always trying to have a back-up for every member and every department, so that knowledge is not lost when people move.

Stakeholders noted that in order to achieve quality “you need a committed HoD” (QDM 3) because, if an HoD does not believe in quality, “other people might not do it” (Dean 2). Dean 1 lauded HoDs who strongly believe in quality “their department is outstanding” while “lousy” HoDs see their quality-related work as “just as an official job”, which means they do not take practical steps to achieve quality. HQU 1 illustrated the importance of HoDs’ belief in quality:

If the HoD is not convinced himself of the importance of quality, quality is going to go down the drain, I assure you. [...] he's not going to be eager to do anything that supports quality.

Quality is not limited to HoDs and their staff. It is also believed that student involvement in the quality processes is critical, as they are the main service users and final ‘outputs’ of a department. For HoD 9, “students are the most important part of quality - one of the focal points - because the graduated students are [the] output”. For this reason, HoDs involved students in the planning and implementation of the departmental activities. They held meetings with students once every semester, providing them with opportunities to contribute to various departmental activities, and were made aware of issues related to accreditation and quality in the department. The majority of HoDs concurred with Ledden et al. (2011) in that they considered student feedback essential to

achieving quality. Furthermore, HoDs use student evaluation “to measure the quality of faculty members before it is sent to the university administration” (HoD 5). This helps HoDs in evaluating academics’ performance without carrying out lesson observation. Students are required to provide their feedback electronically using a university portal, before they can receive their examination results, and as noted by HoD 9, it is the HoD’s responsibility to review this feedback to “see if there is any abnormal evaluation from the students regarding their professors”. Student feedback is also taken into consideration by the higher management of the university administration during the overall performance evaluation. This was best outlined by HoD 4:

Obviously, several methods are used by an HoD to gather the necessary information on the academics and their teaching methods without having to be physically present in the classroom. These methods include requesting information via surveys from students relating to their teachers and their methods. [...] This type of evaluation is usually acted upon by the university.

Education seemed to be considered a service and the students its consumers. Student feedback was considered not only beneficial for students themselves, but also for boosting the departmental quality and image, as noted by HoD 5:

Students’ feedback enhances the quality in our department. So now it is not just about getting this student graduated, but also we care about creating a good reputation for our department.

Moreover, student feedback was seen as one way to improve the quality of teaching. HoD 5 gave a specific example of how he dealt with a professor whose poor fluency in English had been highlighted in student feedback.

In contrast, four HoDs were more cautious about the significance of student feedback. For example, HoD 11 noted that “since this is a new system, students do not have the knowledge and talent to evaluate academics”. Furthermore, it was contended that

students do not take the evaluation of academics seriously and can be biased. HoD 4 presented his personal example of students claiming that certain professors were often late or absent, a judgement not supported by other departmental records. Similar reservations were expressed by HoD 7 and 11.

Some students do rate their low-performing teachers too highly, while others underestimate their high-performing teachers. (HoD 4)

This view is discounted by HoD 3, who argued that in the beginning, students might not be experienced in giving feedback, but over time they would learn and become mature enough to express their views on the performance of academics. He added, “if you explain to the students the purpose of their feedback, they will honestly give their opinion in a serious manner.” Despite some concerns that student feedback may not be completely accurate, it is important to gain an understanding of what students feel is of value to them (Ledden et al., 2011).

4.4.4 Teaching Quality

Teaching quality was emphasised. Nine HoDs believed that effective teaching methods were beneficial to the students as well as society at large, arguing that such methods help students to learn what they are expected to learn, develop their critical thinking skills and “broaden their intellectual horizons” (HoD 2). They considered that students with such skills would ultimately benefit “the community as a whole” (HoD 8) and earn a good name for their university.

The majority of HoDs emphasised that one way to achieve effective teaching was to use “new technology” (HoD 9) and “modern methods” (HoD 10). HoD 2 compared old and modern teaching methods, highlighting the benefits of the latter:

In the past, academics used to use chalk only to write on the board. But, recently, after using the Smart board, and preparing

PowerPoint presentation, they feel the real difference. So, they are saving their time to focus on other aspects, such as the underachievement of students who need extra help and work on additional activities. So, using technology in teaching saves academics time and benefits their students.

Additionally, HoDs made efforts to ensure that academics were well-trained, and consequently sent them to developed countries to undertake training in teaching techniques.

Our department does not allow any Teaching Assistants or Research Assistants to study in Arab countries. They tend to study abroad mainly in the USA or the UK. Also, there are countries such as Australia, and Canada. Staff are only sent to these countries. That is also one of the practices that we do to improve the quality. (HoD 5)

The former University Rector confirmed this point about sending academics abroad to improve the quality of teaching saying, “in the College of Engineering, 80% of the academics in our university graduated from the best ten universities in the US. In the College of Medicine, 75% of consultants have graduated from the six best universities in Canada”. The importance of exposing academics to internationally recognised institutions and research and teaching practices is highlighted by a number of studies (Hamza, 2010; Bukhari and Denman, 2013; Mazi and Altbach, 2013). The benefits of this strategy include having awareness of different classroom contexts and expanding the trainees’ perspectives (Hamza, 2010).

In order to enhance the quality of teaching, it was reported by the HoDs that Al-Jawda University introduced an optional programme of "peer" observation, whereby a colleague from the same department observes a class of another academic and gives him/her feedback to improve his/her teaching skills. However, this review process “is not widespread yet” (HoD 3) because the reviewers must have “the academics’ permission first to follow their way of teaching, and give them some guidance” (HoD 2);

hence there is a shortage of volunteers. This would seem to confirm Bell and Thomson's (2016) contention that peer observation is unlikely to be widely adopted without strong encouragement from senior management.

In addition, HoDs spoke of another technique called "course specification", which helps them in achieving quality by maintaining consistency in teaching. Implementation of this technique is one of the accreditation requirements; each course should be specified and unified between male and female students and across all cohorts taking the same course. The specification should cover course content, reading lists, methods of teaching, assessment and evaluation. It should be approved by the Department Council and implemented by academics. HoDs mentioned several advantages of course specification. The majority of them find it helps students know exactly "what they are going to cover, how they are going to cover it, how they are going to be assessed, and how much credit it carries" (HoD 14). Providing such clarity from the start safeguards the quality of student performance. Additionally, HoDs and the Head of the DQC are obliged to monitor the implementation of course specifications while the latter and the end of semester course report "ensure the student rights, and that there are references that can be used by students to help them better understand the educational process" (HoD 4).

Further advantages of course specification include preventing academics from making independent and random modifications of course content. Hence, students from different classes are meant to be taught the same material. The HoDs admitted that academics may vary in their teaching abilities, but emphasised that "the idea is to standardise the basics, which are the materials, syllabus and the number of classes" (HoD 3). Course content was said to be designed by experienced academics who were responsible for ensuring that it was compatible with students' capabilities. This is reported by HoD 1:

The content of the course cannot be changed by the academics as it has been approved by the Department Council [...] the advantages of this are that the professor knows that what is being given to the student is very well-studied material which fits the mental abilities of the students at this level [...] due to their specialties, their knowledge and their long years of teaching, they have accumulated enough experience to decide how many classes certain material needs, and when students should be evaluated.

Standardisation in teaching and assessment was regarded as important in achieving quality, so course co-ordinators are appointed to guarantee such standardisation. They ensure that course specifications are entirely standardised and well understood by all staff. Furthermore, senior and most experienced academics from both campuses, i.e. male and female lead monthly meetings to discuss educational and administrative affairs with the aim of unifying teaching content and methods. This involves moderation of all assessment to ensure that all students are treated equally and fairly. Usually, HoDs meet with the course co-ordinators at the start of the semester to discuss issues of course standardisation. HoD 15 highlighted the role of a course co-ordinator by stating:

We have this course co-ordination system to make sure that the quality of teaching is standardised in all the sections, so even if we have different teachers who teach different sections, we don't have one teacher who gives bonus marks while another doesn't, the quality of teaching is maintained at the same level. The quality of assessment is again equal so they are all doing the same thing, the rubric should be the same. The co-ordinators must approve the exams, the way of assessment, before they are administered to students.

Moreover, the majority of HoDs agreed with HoD 14's contention that "the departments that implement the course co-ordination system have fewer complaints from students" (HoD 14). According to them, since the introduction of co-ordination, courses are assessed at the same level of difficulty, irrespective of the teachers involved, or the difference in campuses (male/female). This has made students confident about the similarities and overall fairness in teaching and assessment. In addition to the uniformity

of course specification and the appointment of course co-ordinators, three HoDs emphasised that Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO) were also standardised to ensure parity and quality among males and females following the same course (taught at different campuses). As a result, students from both campuses receive the same content and are expected to have similar levels of learning.

The course co-ordinator's role was also seen by the stakeholders as one that could help in this respect since, like HoDs, they recognised this as a technique in achieving quality. Individuals in this position were seen to help a department ensure that quality-related requirements are implemented by academics. HQC 1 illustrated the effectiveness of course co-ordinators:

Course co-ordinators help us to check that everything in the course specification has been followed, whether it be related to learning materials, books references, even the grade distribution [...] through the co-ordinators we know what is being done and what isn't, and who is being co-operative and who isn't. This really helps us to regulate any differences, any discrepancies.

4.4.4.1 Quality of students

Students were seen as both the most important stakeholders and the primary means by which a department could achieve quality. Several of the HoDs highlighted the importance of having high entry requirements because students “go through a very steep learning curve to achieve what the department wants from them as academic students” (HoD 12). HoD 15 expressed similar views:

We are trying to maintain a certain level, so only those who meet these requirements that we have, are able to enter the [X department] so this of course, is helping us to maintain a high quality of students.

The stakeholders agreed about the importance of admitting “excellent” students; some suggested decreasing the number of students had helped in achieving quality as academics were be able to give more individual attention. Dean 3 reflected:

There has been a decrease in the number of students in [X discipline] from 4500 to 2500 students. Thankfully, we have succeeded to some extent and this can be clearly seen in terms of employment and communication skills of our graduates, as well as the level of acceptance of our students when it comes to postgraduate studies.

Those participants who advocated a policy of admitting only “excellent” students suggested it would result in HoDs putting less effort into quality achievement. However, lower student numbers generate lower income so this strategy is rarely sustainable, something highlighted by Fallis (2013). A better longer-term strategy is for teachers to work hard with a wider range of students, adding value to their learning and transforming “good” students into “excellent” ones.

4.5 Summary

There was broad agreement amongst HoDs and the stakeholders concerning the vital role of HoDs in quality achievement, the specific approaches used to achieve it, accreditation and fostering a culture of quality and the need to involve both academics and students as much as possible in the quality implementation process, and to create awareness benefits of quality. Both the HoDs and the stakeholders offered similar strategies for achieving quality, namely, applying a system of course specifications and the appointing of course co-ordinators, sending academics abroad to improve the overall teaching quality of the institution and enrolling high quality students. Both groups regard quality achievement as an on-going process requiring time and continual improvement and the sustainability of good practice. Only stakeholders mentioned the QMS as the

main technique to achieve and maintain quality; this may be because that the QMS is a new initiative, which the HoDs are not yet aware of.

A significant contradiction in the findings was evident with regard to HoDs' involvement in quality-related tasks. Most HoDs claimed to be heavily involved in quality initiatives, curtailed only by a heavy workload, whereas the stakeholders (specifically the DDQMs) contended that most HoDs did not take quality-related work seriously and withdrew from any personal involvement in it, relying instead, on foreigners to work on quality tasks. This contradiction may be explained by HoDs' desire to portray a good image of themselves.

Chapter 5

Factors Influencing HoDs' Abilities to Achieve Departmental Quality

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings relating to the factors that facilitate and/or hinder HoDs in their endeavours to achieve quality in their departments, thereby addressing the second research question of the study, namely: What factors are said to influence HoDs in trying to achieve departmental quality?

The analysis indicates that a single factor could act as a facilitator and a hindrance, depending on its presence or absence. Teamwork, for example, if academics in a department were working as a team to achieve a single goal, it would be a facilitating factor. However, in a case where there is limited teamwork, an HoD could struggle to achieve departmental quality objectives. While identifying facilitating factors, HoDs occasionally mentioned these in terms of aspirations, rather than existing facilitators. However, in the instance of hindrances, HoDs usually enumerated existing barriers that they experience in achieving quality.

5.2 Factors Facilitating Quality

HoDs were asked to indicate how useful a set of eight factors could be in achieving quality and these were scored on a five-point scale (5=extremely useful, 1=not useful at all). To some extent, all the factors were considered useful, as can be seen in Table 8 but some are rated more highly than others.

Table 8: Facilitating Factors

Factor	Rank	1	2	3	4	5	Total (4+5)	Rank
Adequate financial resources		1	2	2	14	40	54	1
		2%	3%	3%	24%	68%	92%	
Support from the Institution			1	4	15	39	54	2
			2%	7%	25%	66%	92%	
Autonomy in administrative decision-making				5	26	28	54	3
				9%	44%	48%	92%	
Support from colleagues		1	1	5	15	37	52	4
		2%	2%	9%	25%	63%	88%	
Good training on quality		1		7	20	31	51	5
		2%		12%	34	53%	86%	
Autonomy in financial decision-making		2	1	6	21	29	50	6
		3%	2%	10%	36%	49%	85%	
Realistic workload		1	6	7	13	32	45	7
		2%	10%	12%	22%	54%	76%	
Support from NCAAA		4	3	12	22	18	40	8
		7%	5%	20%	37%	31%	68%	

5.2.1 Support from the Institution

The three highest scoring factors, highlighted by 92% (54 out of 59 participants), were adequate financial resources, support from the institution, and autonomy in administrative decision-making. Autonomy was usually related to financial autonomy i.e. spending budgets. In the open-ended questions section, where HoDs were offered space to reveal the most important factor in achieving departmental quality, 15 respondents indicated greater provision of financial resources. It is clear, therefore, that financial resources are seen by HoDs as having a significant impact on quality achievement and a limited provision thereof may constitute a major hindrance to this objective (see Section 5.3.1).

Support from the institution was seen as another high scoring factor in facilitating quality and HoDs perceived Al-Jawda University as supportive in many ways. This accords with the findings of Juhl and Christensen (2008) Jones (2011) and Albaqami (2015), all of whom note the need to secure commitments from the senior leadership team. Having explicit high-level support means that middle-level leaders are more likely to hold their academic colleagues to account (Brown and Moshavi, 2002). A majority of the participants mentioned receiving support from various university stakeholders, such as the officers of DDQ, College Dean and Vice-Dean of Quality. HoD 8, for example, acknowledged that DDQ provides support for training efforts and he added, “as long as we are requesting something that will benefit our students and departments, generally, the process moves smoothly”. HoD 4 supported this point and confirmed that there were regular meetings involving HoDs and the consultants working in DDQ to make sure that those in charge of the quality processes within the departments were “aware of what was required before submitting to accreditation body”.

Eight HoDs reported the support of their deans in facilitating their achievement of quality and accreditation in their departments. HoD 14 explicitly said that the College Dean “is supporting all the department needs to achieve international or national accreditation”. Moreover, some viewed the College Dean as a link between the university’s higher management and the departments. HoD 12 acknowledged the facilitating role played by his dean, stating: “[i]n terms of quality, the dean is a facilitator; he facilitates what comes from the university and as far as within his capacity has done very well”.

In some instances, the deans were themselves enthusiastic about the implementation of quality initiatives, which was the most crucial factor. HoD 11 confirmed that his dean provided him with intensive support in his early days in the HoD role: “the dean himself

monitors quality developments taking place in each department”. This dean not only supported the HoDs in their administrative role, but also offered many incentives (appreciation, prizes, and financial rewards) to recognise staff striving for accreditation and the desired quality goals:

The most important factor is the dean’s enthusiasm and commitment. The dean provides an annual ceremony for all staff members and gives out prizes and certificates to those in charge of quality and accreditation as a token of encouragement for their efforts.

HoD 3, however, disagreed with the idea of individual financial incentives, believing that with such rewards, people “would continue to be spoiled” and would be more interested in money-making than maintaining quality. Therefore, keeping in mind that academics often prioritise academic freedom and professional development over financial rewards (Juhl and Christensen, 2008), only a reward scheme was deemed a significant facilitating factor to achieve excellence in HE (Jones, 2011; Kok and McDonald, 2015). This may mean rewards other than financial, which in some cases may be appraisal or recognition.

Seven HoDs also indicated receiving support from the Vice-Dean of quality in their colleges, vis-à-vis interpretation of the quality and accreditation requirements, assistance in reducing any obstacles departments may encounter in their attempts to meet them, and help in producing the accreditation documentation. Almost all the HoDs noted that the former Rector introduced the culture of quality and excellence in HE in the KSA. He spearheaded Al-Jawda University’s drive for national and international accreditation, thereby ranking it highly among other universities at both national and international level. This status was perceived as a fundamental motivator in “encouraging other Saudi universities to compete for high-ranking positions” (HoD 6). The individual concerned used to encourage academics to strive for quality by providing relevant training and cash

prizes for their efforts such as the best academic's webpage. He also organised "the first workshop for HoDs to share their best practices" (HoD 3).

The stakeholders also emphasised the critical role that the DDQ plays in achieving quality. This deanship acts as a bridge between different academic departments and the higher management of Al-Jawda University, trying to secure funds to finance their different quality efforts. It also provides HoDs with "the technical and capacity-building support on quality activities and how they can assure quality in their departments" (QDM 6) and assists departments by providing "mentoring to either achieve the accreditation or enhance the quality practices with what they're already doing" (QDM 5). Therefore, DDQ "makes the HoD's job in pursuing and applying quality much easier" (QDM 1). QDM 3 comprehensively illustrated the important role that DDQ plays in quality achievement:

DDQ tries to facilitate obtaining national and international accreditation in the departments. It is like the linking between the departments and the accreditation bodies by trying to smoothen things out and trying to find a solution for both ends. DDQ has lots of consultants who could fulfil these tasks. Therefore, we give expert advice, workshops if they need them and any kind of assistance to these departments, so we are the catalyst to the achievement of quality by doing so.

Although the stakeholders observed that DDQ plays an important and supportive role in quality achievement, they explained that DDQ has to be invited to the college or department as it "cannot intervene and demand anything from the department without invitation" (QDM 3). In addition, it may be that the departments who needed help most are the least likely to ask for that support; therefore, they may not invite the DDQ to the department. According to QDM 4, DDQ develops the quality system in the university but "cannot force the colleges and departments to implement it". This is because "it's not authoritative or it's not a department with authority over other departments" (QDM

1). Hence, it seems the relationship between DDQ and departments can be challenging and requires improvement in terms of communicating needs and opportunities.

5.2.2 Teamwork

Teamwork (meaning academics working together to achieve a single goal) was seen as a facilitating factor, with 13 respondents mentioning collaboration and cooperation among departmental staff as the most helpful aspect. Considerate and respectful HoDs were seen to positively influence the morale and motivation of staff to work to a high standard, a finding that accords with Bryman (2007). HoD 14 identified this aspect, saying: “when faculty members feel that the head is like a family member, who understands the differences between people, this helps them progress, and is reflected in their delivery of quality”. Additional key facilitating characteristics were identified by seven HoDs. For example, “sharing success among team members” (HoD 5), “praising people for anything they do, even if it is little” (HoD 9), “consulting and involving other staff in decision-making” (HoD 12), and being “transparent” (HoD 4), “proactive, innovative and risk-taking” (HoD 3). Stakeholders also thought it helped if the HoD possessed individual leadership characteristics. For example, Dean 1 noted “if he [HoD] is a good leader, a good administrator, good in his speciality, mature and fair, all these will help him to lead the department in a good way”.

Moreover, six HoDs emphasised that having effective ‘delegation’ skills brought multiple advantages for HoDs and academics alike. According to these HoDs, effective delegation enabled them to reduce their workload and focus on important strategic tasks such as; “formulating departmental strategies for quality achievement” (HoD 11), “networking with companies to enable the employability of the department’s graduates” (HoD 6), having “more academics involved” in quality achievement and running the department as a whole (HoD 15). This is in line with the work by Sackney et al. (2000) and Bolden et al.

(2009), who also found that distributing tasks among staff was beneficial because it created a good work atmosphere and developed a sense of loyalty and team spirit. Additionally, delegating duties to academics “raises their awareness of on-going activities in the department” (HoD 3), and “makes them feel responsible” (HoD 2). Stakeholders agreed, saying that appropriate delegation helped HoDs to reduce their own workload and involve as many academics as possible in quality related work. Additionally, they suggested that the delegation of assignments should be accompanied by “clear and specific instructions or requirements” (HQU 4), with “periodic evaluation and feedback” (Dean 1), so quality goals can be achieved.

HoDs highlighted the importance of collaboration among academics by confirming, for example, that “working together is a fundamental element in quality achievement” (HoD 7), and “teamwork is one of the most important factors that helped me to increase quality in my department” (HoD 2). It also helps “if there is good co-operation between the HoD and the Dean” (HoD 9). Five HoDs linked the availability of qualified academics in a department with quality achievement. This facilitates the work of the DQC. HoD 5, for instance, reported that, “we have experts who helped a lot to achieve these goals” whereas HoD 12 confirmed that “the recipe for achieving quality is there” as “we have very good infrastructure in terms of staff, who have graduated from the best universities in the world”. This indicates that HoDs perceive working together as a team within the department as a decisive factor in being able to achieve quality outcomes. None of the HoDs suggested that communication was an essential element of teamwork, an argument put forward by Harrison and Brodeth (1999); however, some participants mentioned lack of communication as a hindrance (see Section 5.3.3). Such observations may have been triggered their belief that good communication was an integral aspect of teamwork.

In line with the HoDs' opinions, the stakeholders considered teamwork among individuals as a significant factor in assisting HoDs in achieving departmental quality. HQC 2 cited an example of quality outcomes through teamwork in her department: "without working together and this unity within the department, we would not have been able to achieve our goals for the accreditation". Moreover, HQU 1 observed:

You need every member of staff at the college to be a partner in achieving quality. And if you do not have this culture, we will be working alone and it's going to be just a temporary time and then after we get accreditation, everybody just forgets about it because it's not institutionalised.

Both HoDs and stakeholders imply that teamwork is needed for successful quality implementation, which they enunciate as collaboration, communication commitment and shared vision.

5.2.3 Training and Accreditation

A further facilitating characteristic prominent in the results of the study was training. DDQ in Al-Jawda University offers various training courses in order to enhance HoDs understanding of learning and leadership skills. Jones (2011) observed that professional development for HoDs could prove beneficial in performing their role. Leadership skills were not the only training courses that were valued as quality indicators. Six HoDs believed that receiving training from DDQ on ISO and accreditation was a good start for achieving quality. ISO provides HoDs with practical guidelines on how to "take the right administrative decisions" (HoD 4) and "organise the usual business" (HoD 2) of a department. Therefore, ISO has a positive impact on quality achievement.

This ISO accreditation is seen as a way of ensuring that QA training is provided. QDM 2 talked about the leading roles of DDQ and reported that, currently, more than forty-two

units within Al-Jawda University have already been trained and obtained ISO certification:

HoDs to us are more or less our customers and our basic role is to provide support to the different departments to aid them to achieve their quality goals and to get administrative quality like the ISO system certification. We have a dedicated ISO unit for providing HoDs with support and training.

Regarding achieving accreditation, it can be seen from Figure 5 that two thirds of the respondents (67.8%, 40 out of 59) led departments that had already received accreditation and a further 15 admitted that the process was pending.

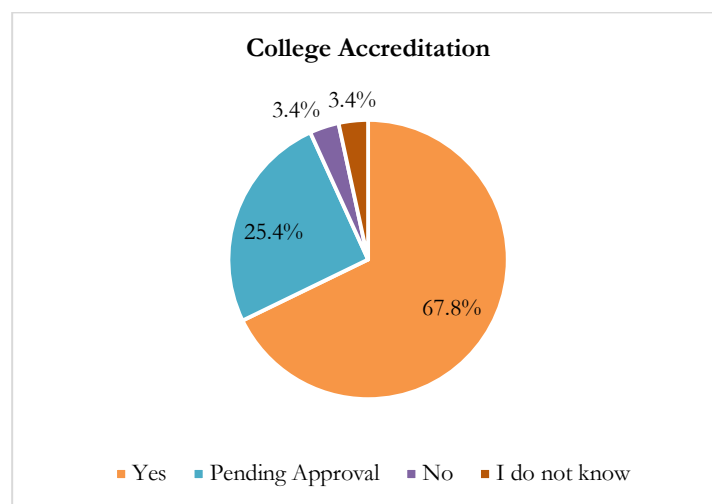


Figure 5: College Accreditation

In cases where a college had received accreditation, HoDs were asked to indicate the year it was achieved and its status (national or international). Table 9 shows that 35 respondents stated that their colleges had achieved international accreditation, compared to 18 respondents who mentioned that their colleges had achieved accreditation at the national level. This does, however, support the interview data where it was reported that international accreditation is more valuable and, arguably, easier to achieve.

Table 9: Year of Achieving National and International Accreditation

Year Accreditation Type	National Accreditation		International Accreditation	
	N	%	N	%
2007	3	7.5	3	7.5
2008	0	0	0	0
2009	0	0	0	0
2010	1	2.5	7	17.5
2011	5	12.5	5	12.5
2012	3	7.5	11	27.5
2013	4	10	8	20
2014	2	5	1	2.5
Achieved	18	45	35	87.5
Not achieved	22	55	5	12.5
Total	40	100	40	100

Several HoDs who were interviewed compared the benefits of national and international accreditation. HoD 2, for example, observed that “international accreditation is far easier to achieve and have sufficient expertise and experience, as well as various applications in many universities that can be beneficial for us”. HoD 5 elaborated that in the international accreditation agencies, “[they] used to consult other national and overseas universities where the accreditation system was applied”. He further added, “We even visited a few universities and hosted a number of speakers.” By contrast, HoDs have no examples of best practice to use as guidance in meeting the requirements of the NCAAA. Therefore, they “do not have a reference when faced with a difficulty because it has not been implemented before” (HoD 11). For these reasons, academics were more eager to work towards international accreditation than NCAAA accreditation, especially as the latter was not perceived as an influential accreditation agency since it was not recognised internationally, as confirmed by HoD 1 who posed the question: “who seriously knows about the NCAAA overseas?” Consequently, neither staff nor graduates are enthusiastic

about fulfilling the NCAAA requirements to achieve national accreditation. HoD 11 commented:

While we all strive to meet the national requirements, it seems that the NCAAA is unheard of and not recognised abroad, and will never be. It is still only a national body operating locally. My colleagues are not really very keen to achieve it. Similarly, when students graduate and go to study abroad and mention being accredited by the NCAAA, the latter may not be identified as a popular accreditation reference. But if they state that they are accredited by a Canadian, American or British commission, this will have a positively different outcome.

This is not to say that the NCAAA does not provide a good localised service, but seems to be more indicative of a need to feel part of an international system, recognised globally. It may also be influenced by the many international organisations operating out of Saudi Arabia, who subscribe to well-known quality systems such as ISO. Given that NCAAA is relatively new, there is a dearth of literature about its value and impact. Nevertheless, there seems to be insufficient experience and understanding of its standards and objectives (Albaqami, 2015).

In contrast to the HoDs, a few stakeholders had positive views about the NCAAA standards. For example, HQU 4 explained that despite the heavy list of KPIs in the NCAAA, “the standards are very comprehensive” and the NCAAA “has done a wonderful job in Al-Jawda University” (QDM 6). QDM 5 appreciated the NCAAA for its quality standards by saying that:

NCAAA made it mandatory for accreditation, accreditation is a must. So, all the academics are now preparing programmes specification, course reports, and are receiving feedback on their performance through student evaluation.

It is clear that there is support for accreditation, especially if training is involved, as there appears to be a need for more understanding of the quality requirements. There are also certain other factors that HoDs and stakeholders perceived as being barriers to quality achievement.

5.3 Factors Hindering Quality

In terms of factors that might be a barrier to achieving quality, HoDs were presented with eight factors, scored on a five-point scale (5 = extremely hindering, 1 = not hindering at all). As can be seen from Table 10 the greatest hindrances are “lack of support from the institution” 76% (45), followed by “lack of financial autonomy” 75% (44), “heavy workload” 71% (42) and “lack of administrative autonomy” 71% (42). However, low on the list of hindering elements is “lack of support from NCAAA” 54% (32). Although NCAAA is meant to be the key player in monitoring quality in Saudi HE, it did not rank high as either a facilitating or hindering factor for HoDs in quality achievement.

Table 10: Hindering Factors

Hindering factor Rank	1	2	3	4	5	Total (4+5)	Rank
Lack of support from the institution	2	4	8	30	15	45	1
	3%	7%	14%	51%	25%	76%	
Lack of financial autonomy	1	5	9	11	33	44	2
	2%	9%	15%	19%	56%	75%	
Heavy workload	1	3	13	10	32	42	3
	2%	5%	22%	17%	54%	71%	
Lack of administrative autonomy	1	8	8	23	19	42	4
	2%	14%	14%	39%	32%	71%	
Lack of support from colleagues	2	4	13	18	22	40	5
	3%	7%	22%	31%	37%	68%	
Lack of financial resources	2	4	15	13	25	38	6
	3%	7%	25%	22%	42%	64%	
Lack of training on quality	2	7	13	22	15	37	7
	3%	12%	22%	37%	25%	63%	
Lack of support from NCAAA	7	3	17	20	12	32	8
	12%	5%	29%	34%	20%	54%	

In the interview data, the following barriers to achieving quality were identified: lack of financial resources and autonomy; lack of administrative support; teamwork; staffing; lack of clarity and continuity; and NCAAA reservations.

5.3.1 Limited Financial Resources and Lack of Autonomy

Since having adequate financial resources was seen as essential for quality achievement, lack thereof was categorised as one of the greatest hindrances. Ten out of 15 interviewed HoDs declared that finance was an obstacle to quality achievement. This was most frequently mentioned by HoDs in scientific disciplines who need to equip and constantly update laboratories. HoD 8, for example, said “lack of funds is sometimes a challenge to facilitate laboratory based scientific experiments” whereas HoD 12 explained that “sometimes funding is a hurdle” and that it was hard to achieve cutting-edge quality with outdated equipment. Similarly, HoD 1 reported that he was unable to buy “a good projector for presentation to guarantee that the pictures of [parts of the human body] were clear”. Ultimately, this negatively affected the quality of students’ learning. He noted that without this modern educational tool “the diagnosis of diseases of our students’ patients would be wrong as they would not see the actual colour of the picture”.

There was also a problem in accessing financial resources and the bureaucracy involved was seen to prevent individuals from taking part in quality-related activities. Indeed, despite Al-Jawda University receiving significant funding from the Saudi government, HoDs described a cumbersome centralised process to access the funding and administrative support required to manage a department smoothly. HoD 3 revealed that “there are no particular budgets for departments heads” and “you have to fight” to access a share of the overall budget. This would seem to resemble the Scottish study where HoDs were found to have limited budgetary control (Saunders and Sin, 2015),

which disempowers HoDs from effective and efficient management of the department. Furthermore, decision-making seems to be affected by a lengthy and time-consuming the approval process (three months for basic secretarial equipment, it was claimed) and bureaucratic, thereby preventing quality outcomes. This can also concur with Albaqami's (2015) claim that there are delays in implementing quality-related tasks in KSA, associated with the lack of financial autonomy and the need to have even the simplest financial claim authorised. HoD 13 highlighted that the workflow related to financial management in the university is time-consuming because it still "runs in an irritatingly traditional manner", suggesting it needed "to be redesigned and improved in every way". Such bureaucracy delays quality achievement as one HoD explains:

I have to write to the dean for everything I want. This takes time and the paperwork goes from one person to another [...] So this hinders the performance, in general. (HoD14)

The majority of stakeholders reported that although in the past each HoD had been given a specific budget by Al-Jawda University to undertake quality related initiatives, nowadays, "there is no budget for quality at the department level" (HQU 1), as financial resources are "very centralised" (QDM 4) and "limited" (HQU 2). Sometimes, a "dean himself doesn't have full financial autonomy" because he has to obtain approval from the university (Dean 3). Usually, such approval and transfer of finances take time; consequently, HoDs' "pace of progress in relation to quality would not be that effective" (QDM 5). Dean 2 reported, "the way they [higher leadership] manage the spending of the money is quite scary". Moreover, QDM 2 observed that:

The amount of autonomy they [HoDs] have is below what it should be and that needs to be improved. Because the more financial autonomy they obtain, the easier it becomes for them to implement the different quality measures that are required.

Regarding administrative autonomy, the great majority of the stakeholders have similar views to HoDs. For example, Dean 1 noted that “there is no great administrative autonomy for HoDs”. If a colleague requests to attend a conference or seeks promotion or suggests the appointment of an academic, HoDs cannot take such decisions unless authorised by the Departmental Council and approved by his/her Dean (Al-Eisa and Smith, 2013). Dean 3 reported a lack of power among HoDs:

An HoD does not really have any authority and is usually regarded more or less as an executive secretary and that is one of the obstacles to quality. In fact, his role tends to be of a secretary in the department, and not a head as such. This is because many of the powers are given to the Departmental Council. I already mentioned that the current situation is not satisfactory. This is due to the system in place in the MoHE which has so many constraints. This old system is quite rigid and does not seem to keep abreast with modern changes.

This finding aligns with UK research (Sotirakou, 2004) which indicates a lack of HoD power, which results in feelings of powerlessness and limited involvement. It also reflects the Saudi hierarchical approach to management, in which decisions are made by seniors and put into practice by middle-level management (Onsman, 2010).

Bureaucracy is seen as stifling quality initiatives; stakeholders noted that Al-Jawda University is highly bureaucratic in terms of its “financial system and administrative affairs which have become so complicated” (QDM 1). QDM 4 evidenced this saying, “they want to do everything by official letter and one official letter can take a few months”, so there is “a huge bureaucracy” (HQU 5). The majority of stakeholders urged Al-Jawda University to grant more financial and administrative authority to HoDs. QDM 4 thought that if HoDs have “financial autonomy and moral support from higher management it helps them to achieve quality”. It was suggested that enhancing financial autonomy for HoDs “will make the issue faster than it is because you don't need to wait for other people to discuss and talk then take decision after months” (HQU 5). QDM 2

added that if HoDs can offer sufficient financial incentives to their employees, “they will provide their better contribution to the quality effort [...] would be much more productive and much more fruitful at the same time”. Dean 2 suggested flexible budgeting to address the issue of financial autonomy for HoDs:

Give them a certain budget from the beginning and if they need more, justify it and we will give it. We call it flexible budget. If we have a flexible budget between the universities down to the HoD, this will smooth quality achievement.

Although the stakeholders urge Al-Jawda University to give more financial autonomy to HoDs, some like QDMs 2 and 4 noted the importance of HoDs spending the money wisely by targeting the right quality initiatives.

Most interviewees bemoaned the lack of autonomy, which is also explicit in the HoD job description (see point 3, titled *Authorities*, of the HoD job description in Section 4.2.1.1). Six out of twelve entries in this part of the job description start with the word *recommending*, meaning HoDs have limited authority in core aspects of the department, e.g. financial or contractual decisions.

In spite of the above, four HoDs believed that Al-Jawda University empowered them to make certain administrative and financial decisions, allowing them to support departmental initiatives, thereby improving quality. They cited that they “have freedom to lower the teaching hours” (HoD 13) of academics to release them to complete paperwork related to quality, which was clearly important to them. HoDs cited several instances of using financial power to support quality initiatives as acknowledged by HoD 1, “I have a budget that allows me to give the staff bonuses to motivate academics and gain their co-operation in working towards accreditation”. Furthermore, it was mentioned that using their financial authority helped the HoDs to “send academics

abroad to attend conferences regarding quality” (HoD 5). HoD 3 explained how he used his power to provide academics with “labs and equipment” in order to achieve quality.

Similarly, some stakeholders have slightly different views regarding the limited financial and administrative independence of HoDs. One thought “financial autonomy is not a prerequisite to achieving quality” (HQU 4). Others believed the amount of freedom was sufficient: According to QDM 8, HoDs have “a very good level of freedom to implement their own decisions maybe with the exception of being not able to fire someone”. HQU 1 further elaborated that HoDs still enjoy considerable power and achieve good results on quality, saying:

HoDs have the power to form committees to oversee anything that the department practises. Like for example, research, teaching, they have an authority to bring a member or staff, for example, to raise questions with regards to inflation of grades or opposites. If students complain about using certain unfavourable strategies of teaching or unfair assessment, the HoD has the authority to bring the member of staff and raise these questions. He also has an authority over staff attendances and absences. He can recruit staff, so has great authority.

It is clear that there are differences in the management of financial resources and autonomy that HoDs have and it seems that some HoDs may have expectations that are not being met in terms of providing what they perceive as quality initiatives. This further indicates that there is an apparent discrepancy in the prescribed and practised levels of authority in Al-Jawda University, which may affect the intended quality achievement in some departments.

5.3.2 Lack of Institutional Support

Lack of institutional support was seen as another major barrier. It seems impossible for HoDs to perform all the activities related to their role without support from other colleagues, including administrative staff. However, most HoDs were dissatisfied with the number and quality of administrative support staff available to a department. HoD

10 assessed the existing administrative team as “incompetent [who] did not rise to expectations, so they were unable to deliver the kind of quality that was needed”. HoD 7 elaborated on this shortcoming:

We lack the personnel, the people who can become good secretaries, time-organisers for us. And we usually spend most of the time writing/drafting letters, drafting documents [...] and typing them, sometimes.

This lack of competent administrative staff was blamed for HoDs’ heavy involvement in managerial and administrative tasks which prevented them from “achieving a balance between teaching and administrative work, as well as an interest in scientific research” (HoD 4). HoD 9 added that the high concentration on administration meant that “sometimes you don’t have the time for research or any other aspects of quality”, and HoD 12 referred to this hurdle, stating:

HoDs and faculty members are burdened with administrative work [...] so, not one single person is free from administrative work. Therefore, it is one of the biggest hurdles preventing our achievement of quality throughout the academic process.

Almost all the stakeholders identified that there is a lack of administrative and support staff, who are trained and have experience in secretarial and quality work. Dean 2 said, “I have to deal with all correspondence because my emails are all in English. I don’t have an English-speaking secretary”, while HQU 4 stated:

HoDs are usually facing a lack of human resources, particularly administrative staff; even sometimes when you do have the proper numbers, they are not sufficiently qualified.

These findings from this Saudi HEI, are in line with studies conducted in other countries, including the UK (Deem, 2000; Smith, 2002; Floyd, 2012) and China (Wang, 2014), in that HoDs become involved in petty administrative tasks. They also emphasise the overwhelming impact of administrative duties on HoDs’ teaching and research

commitments. Furthermore, Sotirakou (2004) highlights that such a situation can create a conflict between HoDs' managerial duties and academic commitment. Wang (2014) also points out that QA procedures require a great deal of paperwork, which in turn makes the lack of administrative support particularly detrimental. It is therefore apparent that the impact of administrative tasks still impinges on quality achievement in HE.

Moreover, the stakeholders agreed that it was challenging for HoDs to maintain a balance "between their teaching load, their research productivity, managing their staff and their engagement in quality activities" (QDM 6). It was stated that "our colleagues [HoDs] are doing everything, even collecting paper from there and there and this really destroys your human resources because people are getting tired and without reward" (Vice-Dean), thereby, "we are going to lose them for sure!" (HQU 1). Since HoDs are not supported by adequate administrative staff, "asking them for more support is quite difficult" (HQU 4). HQU 5 outlines this obstacle as follows:

HoDs and academics have a teaching, administrative, or meeting load, plus being a member in different committees, so you find yourself as one person having a lot of hats, a lot of duties [...] So it takes them more time to achieve quality, especially with the shortage of qualified admin because they are under pressure.

In order to address the above issue, the stakeholders suggested they "have expert staff in every department, specialised in quality systems" (QDM 8). QDM 5 strongly emphasised this point:

Let me categorically say, and I am deliberately using the word categorically, quality cannot be maintained unless the university has a team of trained programme evaluators. Those who know what programme evaluation is, how it is done, what impact evaluation has, what situation analysis is, how it is done and how quality can be improved.

The lack of support from the institution in providing administrative support means that many HoDs said they simply do not have sufficient time to carry out their normal duties.

They find it challenging to allocate more hours to QA when their time is already filled with carrying out routine administrative tasks. Likewise, in the Australian context, Johnson et al. (2002) note that compliance with quality duties fragment the time of academics, which contributes to job dissatisfaction. However, it is not just a lack of support from the institution, but also from their colleagues, as shown in the next section.

5.3.3 Lack of Teamwork

Some stakeholders pointed to the lack of communication and support mechanisms among HoDs at the university level. It was noted that HoDs “don’t talk to each other [and] don’t cooperate with each other” (QDM 8). The stakeholders also noted that different department heads did not co-operate with each other. QDM 4 confirmed this point saying, “a very big issue on quality achievement - coordination, communication, and cooperation are very lacking elements”. This seems to affect the levels of collegiality and teamwork which are prerequisites for the effectiveness of most departmental operations (Harrison and Brodeth, 1999; Hellawell and Hancock, 2001; Bryman, 2007).

Departments also operate on the principle of gender segregation for students and academics and are, therefore, separated geographically into male and female campuses. However, in terms of hierarchy and chain of command, they are considered as a single entity with one HoD in each department mostly in the male campus and one or two deputy HoDs, depending on the size of the department, mostly in the female campus. In matters of accreditation, the bodies concerned do not take into consideration the fact that one department is divided into two gender-specific units, which means that the requirements of accreditation bodies are difficult to meet. For example, a department must submit a unified course report with the name of the academics who teaches this course; HoD 12 considered this as a “hurdle” to be overcome since “the faculty members who teach this course are split into two different campuses and two different

student bodies”. It is relevant to mention that although students are split between the male and female campuses, the teachers at both campuses have to teach the same content at the same level due to shared course syllabus and course specification. In addition, HoD 14, who heads a department in the female campus, pinpointed a significant negative implication regarding the requirement to submit a combined male and female course report:

If you compare the female campus with the male campus, you will see the differences in the implementation of quality as well, and this is unfortunately reflected in the overall report. In terms of writing course reports and submitting syllabi according to the standards of quality, we see that these aspects are not really implemented [on the male campus] the way they are on the female side. But unfortunately, one of the shortcomings of this administration here is that, in the end, there should be one report that represents the college, both sections, so they put them together and present one report, which is not fair to one section. It is so unfortunate [...] not because we are better but because we are, kind of, more enthusiastic about this issue.

It is important to note that many male HoDs agreed that female departments and HoDs were better at quality implementation. HoD 6, for example, admitted that “to be honest, female colleagues are more professional and have a stronger desire to achieve quality than the male section”. This further confirms HoD 14’s response and indicates an assumption that females are more dedicated to tasks, and perform their roles with higher efficiency, although they have limited presence among senior level managers.

There was a sense that there was limited team spirit among personnel. Seven HoDs reported that although quality achievement requires collective effort and the involvement of all parties, there is limited teamwork in departments, and “this is where the problem lies” (HoD 1), one possible reason being that “not everybody is capable and willing to participate” (HoD 15) in the quality achievement process and “even lack of co-operation from a single party can disrupt the whole process” (HoD 12). However, the management of academics in general emerged as the most challenging factor, as reported by twelve

HoDs. In this respect, HoD 15 noted that “the worst thing is to manage faculty members,” many of whom considered accreditation compliance as an intrusion on their academic freedom, and were unmotivated to genuinely work towards quality goals, as HoD 5 said:

The most difficult challenge is how to sell this idea of quality to the academics. Most of them do not care about quality procedures. They are caring about their teaching and research [...] all faculty members feel that they have academic freedom, so they do not want the department or the HoD to interfere or interrupt their activities or get inside their affairs regarding teaching or research.

HoDs, who lack authority to monitor their quality-related tasks experience several challenges in managing human resources (Hellawell and Hancock, 2001; Deem, 2004), particularly when academics enjoy professional freedom. This sensitive task (Preston and Price, 2012), otherwise known as “herding cats” (Brown and Moshavi, 2002; Deem, 2000) can be very restrictive in terms of imposing tasks on colleagues, as noted by HoD 6 who highlighted the absence of any regulation to manage academics who “go about their own affairs, regardless of their HoD or Dean”. The claim that academics may invoke their freedom as a way of avoiding QA or paying it lip service is one noted in the literature. Anderson and Johnson (2006) and Kleijnen et al. (2011, 2013, 2014) describe academics who perceive QA as a restricting activity that is focused on compliance and accountability, while they pursue traditional professional autonomy and associate quality with enhancement rather than regulations.

HoD 13 endorsed this view, adding that academics are “PhD holders and by default they are trusted people. It can be extremely embarrassing for me to control what they teach” and despite weaknesses in their teaching which hinders quality achievement “it is difficult to carry out a classroom visit to see how teaching is conducted”. Adding to these challenges, HoD 9 said that after assigning academics to their classes and giving them

their schedules “we let them pave their own roads, I am too embarrassed to check on them with regards to punctuality and quality of teaching”. He also considered this “a black hole” because he does not know what is happening in the classroom. Hence, HoDs are unable to ensure teaching quality and whether students are having a good learning experience. They also noted that some academics simply completing the required paperwork, “with no focus on quality” (HoD 10), a point raised by HoD 7:

Some teachers say they have already covered the whole syllabus, but not how was it covered [...] did the students actually learn? We need to make sure that the students learn in order to achieve quality.

There is also concern that the quality of some of the staff may be preventing overall quality achievement, especially with academics on teaching-only contracts.

5.3.4 Staffing Issues

The majority of HoDs considered most hindrances at the departmental level as attributed to academics since a fundamental problem mentioned by eleven HoDs related to the difficulty of recruiting well-qualified academics. The recruitment process for non-Saudi staff was frequently criticised. HoDs reported that whilst the recruitment regulations for Saudi nationals are tight and rigorous in terms of academic qualifications, such conditions do not apply to non-Saudi staff. For example, Saudi academics are required to have obtained a Bachelor’s, Master’s and PhD degrees in the same academic discipline with high grades from Al-Jawda University (as a preferred option) or from a university among the top hundred in the world if they studied abroad, which does not apply to non-Saudi academics. Furthermore, Saudi academics are offered permanent jobs, while expatriates are employed on one-year contracts that are renewable, based on their performance and the need for particular academic disciplines. HoD 2 stated that the

“random choice of non-Saudi academics negatively affects the progress of the department and quality achievement”. This lack of uniformity in recruitment regulations hinders departmental quality achievement since most HoDs thought “very few expatriate academics were up to the job” (HoD 13) as “most student complaints relate to non-Saudi faculty members” (HoD 5).

HoDs indicated several factors associated with the poor performance of non-Saudi academics from other Arabic countries. Firstly, they “graduated from under-performing universities in their countries” (HoD 13), so “the standards they were used to are much lower than the ones they are expected to live up to in their new academic environment” (HoD 4), which results in a decline in student levels and outcomes. HoD 6 who has a significant number of expatriate academics in his department compared the academic and teaching experiences of Saudi and non-Saudi academics from other Arabic speaking countries:

The majority of the Saudis have graduated from the US and the UK. This exposure to developed educational environments has actually enhanced their teaching styles and academic status, as well as refreshed their knowledge and resources. Most of the non-Saudis here graduated from their own countries and as such were not exposed to a multicultural academic environment in the developed world. This meant they somehow developed their teaching style around the environment they were in. These are actually the reasons that render Saudi academics far more efficient than their counterparts from elsewhere. The evidence is clear on the ground and even students can witness such differences.

The regulations governing the recruitment of Saudi academics are clearly laid down, see Section 1.3.3 and CoHE (1998) while the employment of foreign staff seems to be regulated in more general terms (CoHE, 1997), without any specification of required degrees from highly-ranked HEIs. Therefore, the above criticism from the participants shows that employment is a pressing issue that has been given insufficient attention in the academic literature of the field.

HoDs further highlighted serious concerns related to the poor professional conduct of non-Saudi academics, which negatively affects the educational outcomes of the whole department. For example, HoD 13 noted that non-Saudis “do not really pay attention to the students’ learning. They also give their students marks that they do not deserve”. These teachers aim to “become popular among their students and renew their contracts” (HoD 6). This danger is increased since “students lack adequate awareness to challenge their teachers and say they want to benefit themselves” (HoD 4). HoD 11 further strengthened this point, stating that non-Saudi academics are more interested in financial reward rather than quality-related outcomes:

Some expatriate teachers just look at it in terms of financial benefits with the lucrative salaries and high income on offer. Some non-Saudi academics intentionally let students pass their exams to attract more students and thus make more money. As a result, they apply random standards in the teaching process. In fact, expatriate teachers are a source of countless problems, but what brings them all together are the financial ends they seek and not love for the profession.

Since the reward system of Al-Jawda University is linked to the students’ results and the students’ appraisal of academics, non-Saudi academics were said to manipulate the system to maximise their rewards, boost their income and have their job contracts extended. This suggests that multiple forces push non-Saudis to help students to obtain good marks, as opposed to Saudi academics whose salary and position does not depend on student evaluation. This practice can be damaging for achieving quality in terms of graduate studies. It is relevant to point out that in a system where student evaluation of teaching is given considerable weight, the system can be potentially flawed by giving the students the content they want rather than the content they need, and, in turn, inflating their grades. Grade inflation is widely discussed in literature (Zangenehzadeh, 1988; Greenwald, 1997; Anglin and Meng, 2000; Eiszler, 2002; Ewing, 2012) with some studies suggesting grades increase when students are given the opportunity to evaluate teachers, as participants in the current study allege.

One participant, HoD 6, further explained that HoDs also have limited power to fire under-performing non-Saudi academics, which hinders quality achievement. On the one hand, non-Saudi staff are employed on short-term contracts that do not have to be extended (Mazawi, 2005). On the other, HoD 6 claims that only one expatriate academic per year can be dismissed. The short (two-year) tenure of HoDs' office also adversely affects this issue. This perspective is exemplified as follows:

If I ever wish to terminate any teaching contracts, I am only allowed to terminate one single contract each year. But given that I have a two-year term as HoD, I will only be able to do without one person because I was appointed in this position soon after contracts had been renewed. When I have the opportunity to decide contracts next, it'll be my final year as a head and I can only then decide to terminate one contract out of ten. Of course, the existence of one under-performing academic in a department hampers quality achievement.

Hence, if in this department, the HoD has genuinely limited power to deal with under-performing academics, the pursuit of quality in his unit can be seriously affected, if not entirely unachievable. If practices such as being permitted to terminate only one contract per year are not within the official code of conduct, they could be instructions received directly from the College Dean. Overall, such a situation becomes a hurdle to quality achievement.

In terms of Saudi academics, HoDs commented that in the past, Al-Jawda University had no opportunities to grant scholarships for Saudi academics to study abroad, but in the last decade, substantial numbers of young academics had been funded to study in world-class universities. This resulted in the emergence of different attitudes and skills gaps between senior and younger Saudi academics, which prompted resistance from more senior Saudi academics who opposed changes, as noted by HoDs 8 and 15. Senior Saudi academics are reportedly not prepared to become involved in using modern technology, and in initiatives such as quality implementation as these represent more work for them. This reluctance may hinder quality achievement. Indeed, HoDs stated that these

members resist such change through “fear” (HoD 2) because “quality implementation is too difficult for them” (HoD 4) or out of arrogance, believing “they have enough experience, so they are doing the right thing” (HoD 11). Moreover, some of them believe that quality is a “fad, not real science” (HoD 3), or are simply “too lazy to implement quality” (HoD 13) because QA is usually associated with bureaucracy and heavy paperwork (Newton, 2002; Wang, 2014). HoD 6 summarised the reasons behind the resistance of senior teachers, who are about to retire from his department. Firstly, they have been teaching for more than thirty years and therefore “they think we are only lightweight compared to them”. It is thus unthinkable that “we would be teaching them what they already know”. Secondly, they resist change because it is difficult for them to “cope with all the workload”. Consequently, many senior members “seek early retirement”. This can encapsulate the cultural tension between the younger and older academics who have arrived at their posts with different experiences. However, such resistance to change among academics was also emphasised in research on Saudi Arabia by Albaqami (2015) and in the UK by Hellowell and Hancock (2001).

HoD 5 commented that Saudi senior academics viewed his request to submit their completed course reports at the end of the semester and provide details of students’ results with suspicion, believing they were being monitored, controlled and measured on their performance. Previous literature (Morrish and Sauntson, 2016) has noted the tendency of some academics to view QA simply as a surveillance regime, which can be counterproductive. HoD 5 further commented: “I have difficulty in convincing them that, this is not about you, not to evaluate you, this is to enhance quality in our department”. HoD 14 added: “we had to go through meeting after meeting to persuade them that this quality thing is not there to threaten anybody; it is just to improve how we perform”.

The University's encouragement to use modern technology in teaching is also often rebuffed by senior members, who find the use of projectors, smart boards, and the internet beyond their knowledge and capabilities. Students, however, are keen to incorporate modern technologies in their learning. Hence, a gap exists between students' preferred learning environment and teachers' preferred teaching methods, which represents a barrier to the educational process, as noted by HoD 15, saying "some of the senior staff don't really know how to use modern technology; this is the main hindrance as the student generation all use it". HoD 10 further explained that "senior academics are not willing to compromise and join in a training course to learn about smart boards and how to use them in teaching etc., because they think they are too old to learn new methods." Such resistance to technology, especially among older Saudi academics, has been suggested as one of the reasons for the existence of dated teaching methods in Saudi Arabia and missed improvement opportunities (Al-Ghamdi and Tight, 2013; Alenezi, 2012). Other studies have found a lack of training opportunities as such (Colbran and Al-Ghreimil, 2013), but at Al-Jawda University there is much training available for staff at all levels. The issue, however, is that these options are not often considered by academics.

The problem of resistance to training can also be attributed to lower interest of senior academics in professional development, "because they are full professors beyond criticism given their university teaching status and their ownership of several research studies and this is the main obstacle to quality" (HoD 10). Such a staffing challenge for HoDs may be exaggerated by the fact that Saudi and Islamic culture requires respect for elders, which means it is virtually impossible to hold older members of staff accountable for their performance. Although this is seen in many countries, it is particularly problematic at Al-Jawda University because most HoDs are junior members of staff and quite young.

Moreover, since performance assessment does not include quality achievements, academics are hardly incentivised or compelled to participate in quality efforts. HoD 9 commented: “I have no tool as an HoD to force faculty members to participate in the quality process. Quality and accreditation are not part of their evaluation”. Whatever their performance, Saudi academics are secure in their jobs:

All Saudi faculty members are tenured. Their job is guaranteed. No one can fire them except the King. So that is why they feel that even you as an HoD, or the dean or the rector cannot fire them. [...] They do not care about improving quality or any other requirements unless you convince them to accept this idea. (HoD 5)

Furthermore, the former Rector reported that the University has over 60,000 students and 4,000 academics, in addition to more than 10,000 other employees; therefore, “overcoming resistance to change and establishing a culture of quality with the huge size of the institution was one of the biggest challenges.” These findings resonate with HoDs’ views on managing their academics and selling the idea of quality to them. The stakeholders considered the biggest concern is “how to motivate staff towards quality achievement” (QDM 2) and “change the picture and the image of the QA” (HQC 1) if they are “not convinced that quality is a backbone for the educational process itself” (QDM 7). Moreover, HQU 2 stated that not all the members of a department accept the need to assure quality “they think it’s just a waste of time and effort”. HQU 3 mentioned the uncooperative attitude of academics, especially from senior colleagues:

Some departments are not very cooperative. They [academics] like to postpone, they don't submit their papers [...] they don't actually have young teachers, most of them are over fifty. So, they are slow when it comes to work. They are not so enthusiastic about accreditation. The young ones, most of them, let's say, in their 30s and they are willing to do what we ask them to do. So, the young teachers are obsessed with quality and accreditations. The [X] department, most of them are old; they don't even understand what is meant by quality.

The stakeholders also specified the lack of power within Saudi universities in relation to hiring and dismissing underachieving academics, a point noted by Alkhazim (2003) as

one of the hindrance to quality attainment. In fact, HoDs “cannot fire and hire, [even] if the faculty missed three lectures” (Dean 2), and they “haven’t a big role in the employment system of their faculty members” (QDM 7), in both cases they will inform the Dean who will then report this to the Vice-Rector; sometimes, even “a dean of the college doesn’t have the power to sack underperforming staff” (QDM 1). The challenge for HoDs is enhanced “if the employee is a Saudi citizen” that is “very difficult to fire” (QDM 2). According to the Ministry regulations, the usual retirement age for Saudi nationals is sixty years. In some cases, academics may be offered an additional two-year contract even after their formal retirement if they request it. A Vice-Dean emphasised the limited authority of HoDs to terminate the contracts of Saudi nationals, an observation which was already present in literature over a decade ago (see Alkhazim (2003) and Mazawi (2005)). This also corroborated the HoDs’ views regarding the challenges in working with senior academics:

For senior faculty member, his contract should not be renewed, especially the Saudi ones. Some of them, we don’t need them. Their conduct with their colleagues is very bad. Bad news in all aspects. So, the department head said, “We don’t like to renew this guy after the age of 60 or whatever.” Then two days after, the university said, ‘No. He will be there.’ So why did you ask us in the first place? I think nobody dared to do that to be honest with you and this delays quality achievement as I said. (Vice-Dean)

To summarise, HoDs generally experienced challenges from under-performing academics. However, the nature of the challenges differs from Saudi to non-Saudi academics. Many of the non-Saudis are not well qualified and skilled to perform the role at a par with required quality; however, for Saudis, it is more about their negative attitude towards quality and resultant resistance. Importantly, in both cases, HoDs have limited authority to fire under-achieving academics.

However, in many cases, staff simply did not know what was expected of them in terms of quality achievement, a point to which we now turn.

5.3.5 Lack of Clarity

Another hindrance relates to the alleged lack of clarity among academics regarding expectations towards quality achievement and HoDs' confusion about the requirements of their role. More than half of the HoDs identified a lack of clarity in their job descriptions, the goals they are expected to achieve and what they will be held accountable for. This finding is similar to the UK context, where Kok and McDonald (2015) found in their comprehensive study that lack of clarity regarding the HoD role is linked to their poor performance and limited support for staff and students.

In the context of this study, the vagueness in their responsibilities was associated with their under-performance especially with the quality aspect, as outlined by HoD 5: “they chose me to become [an] HoD without my having enough knowledge about my responsibility. [Therefore] in the first two months, I felt that I got lost”. HoD 11 also felt that way, confirming that “there is no job description or clear tasks required from the HoD”. This view was endorsed by HoD 9, who observed that the HoD's job is largely determined by the direction and policy of the respective dean:

We don't have very clear tasks and definitive objectives. And it varies according to the policy of the Dean. So, this can be seen as a general problem in achieving quality. I don't have job descriptions. Even if you have, sometimes it cannot be applied. And when I'm talking about this, because I was there for three deans to be in charge of the college, everyone has his own policy and his own thinking.

Moreover, the notion of quality has only recently been introduced in the University, meaning that a large percentage of staff lack any conceptual and practical understanding of different elements within the QA process. Consequently, this causes “obstacles in making sure that we actually achieve quality” (HoD 7). Six HoDs noted that whilst Al-

Jawda University currently places a great deal of emphasis on the need to achieve quality, it also fails to provide guidance for HoDs, especially new ones, on how to attain this within their departments and what practices they should follow for success. The HoDs argued that generic information and knowledge on quality is insufficient to achieve specific objectives relating to their subjects, and hence represents a barrier to the achievement of overall quality. HoD 15 also noted:

We have a written quality booklet but it is very general [...] it was good to see it, but they did not tell me how I could achieve it, do it. I noticed this happened with new HoDs in our college, they say, “okay, we believe in quality, we believe in certain goals, but how can I achieve those goals? [...] So, they are missing the methodology they have to use to achieve the quality requirements.

In the context of KSA, lack of awareness about national quality management among academics has already been noted by Albaqami (2015), who investigated facilitating and inhibiting factors to QA in Saudi HEIs; however, there seem virtually no specific studies relating to QA processes and HoD roles.

That said, when in the questionnaire HoDs were asked to state whether they were provided with a description of their current job responsibilities, 61% (36) responded positively. Of these, 82% (32) indicated that quality implementation/achievement was part of the job description. These results seem to contradict qualitative data of this study in that more than half of the interviewees emphasised that they were not provided with a clear job description or guidance on quality achievement. It is worth mentioning that a formal job description with quality supervision specifications for HoDs was established in Al-Jawda University (see chapter 1). This indicates that HoDs should understand that they are expected to maintain quality; however, these findings reveal that HoDs are given very little guidance on how to implement a quality system.

Seven HoDs noted that the implementation of the quality system has resulted in “just filling in the forms” (HoD 3), and “ticking the points and that is it” (HoD 15), resulting in the belief among them that quality is only represented on paper, but not in reality. The implication is that staff “were just concerned about having the files filled with forms instead of really believing in implementing the system” (HoD 1), and “changing their practices in a classroom for the better” (HoD 7). HoD 6 considered this practice as detrimental to the overall aim of quality achievement, criticising the emphasis on completing the quality file paperwork at the expense of adopting a genuine quality culture:

Some academics complete the file 100%, but when it comes to practice, they are useless, presenting only theory with no thought [...] It is a disaster really because they presented an excellent file, but this had no connection to their teaching. My main complaint is that we do not necessarily need to have a file, but we do need to have a qualified teacher, and this constitutes the culture of quality.

HoD 4 added weight to this opinion, which also is indicative of the widespread view among the HoDs that the implementation of the quality system has failed to achieve academics’ commitment to genuine quality practices. He referred to the huge investment in quality initiatives that have not achieved the desired outcomes:

The quality move has cost a lot of money but nothing has been invested properly. The application of quality and its concepts and standards is only on paper and nothing has changed. I mean quality in the university environment has never materialised in a concrete way. For example, a lecturer and his academic practices are almost the same and have never changed, which means that he does not care about developing himself academically.

This view that quality is simply a bureaucratic exercise is characterised by a compliance orientation (Land and Rattray, 2014), in which HEIs follow quality guidance superficially, rather than applying it in the right spirit (Westerheijden and Kohoutek, 2014). Those involved in quality aim to tick the required boxes, and this hinders the development of a culture of continuous improvement and reflection (Blackmur, 2004; Bellingham, 2008).

Similar to many HoDs', who thought they were overburdened to meet quality requirements, the stakeholders complained "the university just keep asking for new things all the time" (Dean 2). A Vice-Dean also expressed his frustration about the system:

It seems to be the university is obsessed with this quality word. It's become a nightmare for us because it's just too much. The accreditation from international, national, then local QMS and then others are going to come. Not to mention other things come from other parts in the university. Every day we are hit by another requirement, 'We need this, we need that.' We heard something coming up that will come soon, they call it QZ. I don't know to be honest with you what that name means.

In addition, the stakeholders emphasised that there is lack of institutionalisation and continuity in the work of quality, which further confirms the perception of quality as only a box-ticking exercise (Blackmur, 2004; Bellingham, 2008). A Vice-Dean noted that when a newcomer becomes a Vice-Rector, a Dean or HoD, "they come with a new idea and apply it, and this is not good for quality". Moreover, it was noted that quality related work is dependent on individual HoDs. If a hardworking and committed HoD leaves a department, the quality related-task also leaves with him/her, as expressed by HQU 1:

Once they [HoDs] leave, everything leaves with them, everything just falls apart because nothing is institutionalised.

The stakeholders added that when an HoD finishes his/her tenure, a newcomer finds it challenging to understand what s/he is expected to do in relation to quality duties since s/he "doesn't find a file or the detailed description of his/her job, which s/he can follow up" (HQU 2). Such a lack of handover results in limited transparency and discontinuity of the initiatives on quality. This issue is further compounded since there is no formal arrangement of "transfer of experience" (Dean 3) which helps in preserving institutional memory at the department level. It was reported that HoDs, HQUs and HQCs do not start from where the previous heads end, but "they actually start from scratch, exactly;

this is what's happening. It's a waste of effort, time, energy, and money” (HQC 1). Moreover, HQU 1 further observed the issue of lack of continuity when a non-Saudi employee leaves a department, especially at the male campus:

Many of our departments here, especially on the men's side heading DQC within the department, are mostly expats. And when these non-Saudis leave at some point in time, they don't leave any information at all. So, they work hard and then they leave. And when they leave, the HoD is left with nobody, with no information whatsoever.

The stakeholders suggested that if Al-Jawda University wishes to establish a sustainable quality system, all staff members should be “involved in that work of quality” (Dean 3) instead of it being a “one-man show” (HQC 2) because “devoting or allotting all of these responsibilities to one person is not safe”.

Furthermore, in the past, under the former Rector, Al-Jawda University rewarded DQC members financially for their extra workload. Currently, HoDs find it difficult to have staff committed to the work of this committee since the financial rewards have been minimised. This “caused a loss of enthusiasm among many departments and colleges” (HoD 4). Furthermore, eight HoDs stated that not all the academics are motivated to work in the DQC. This is due to the nature of the committee work, which was negatively perceived by most academics, who considered it to be “endlessly demanding” (HoD 9), time-consuming and “dirty work” (HoD 5). Consequently, according to HoDs, it seems hard to encourage academics to work on such a committee when it is voluntary. Furthermore, HoDs believed that the short-term approach adopted by the DQC, primarily aimed at gaining accreditation for their departments, causes committee members to lose interest in quality issues once accreditation has been secured, as HoD 5 elucidated:

Some DQC are not doing what they did before the accreditation because they say “okay, we got it now, we do not need to deal with the students' requirements anymore”. I felt sad about it! I am concerned about it. I do not want to say this, but we have to face this

problem. I know you are a researcher; you might find solutions for this [...] so most faculty members who participated in the quality process, mainly work just to be accredited, not because they want to increase the quality of the department. (HoD 5)

This short-term approach of Al-Jawda University to achieving quality was also criticised by the stakeholders. It was noted that in the last four years, the University put a great deal of emphasis on achieving accreditation and certification for its different departments and programmes. However, the actual achievement of quality was not identified as a priority, as acknowledged by QDM 6 who said, “we don't think about the culture a lot, we thought about applying the quality and seeking for the accreditations”. QDM 1 added, “we have papers but we don't have a culture of quality”. This resulted in misunderstanding and suspicion about quality among the individuals working in the university. QDM 5 reported that he reviewed a few course files of academics recently, and he realised that “they just dump the paper into their file and they did not work on the quality element of that.”

Accreditation can have many benefits such as confirmation that an institution has fulfilled certain standards (Darandari and Cardew, 2013), thus providing legitimacy to an institution and/or programme (Harvey, 2004) and safeguarding the rights of parties involved (Schierenbeck, 2013). However, in this study the stakeholders noted an over-emphasis on accreditation, which resulted in a lack of in-depth understanding of the quality concept among HoDs and academics. It was stated that they have a general awareness of quality and its requirements but “most of them don't know why they are doing this quality job. What does it mean to them? How is it going to help them?” (QDM 6). Therefore, “people [academics] underestimate the [importance of] quality” (Dean 2), and some HoDs think that “quality is mainly about collecting papers” (HQU 3). This superficial understanding may adversely affect quality achievement. One of the implications is that certain HoDs and academic staff consider obtaining accreditation as the ultimate objective of quality achievement rather than the first step towards it, as

illustrated by QDM 3: “people [staff] think that the accreditation is the last stop of the journey”. The stakeholders reported that there is no continuity of quality work because “after accreditation, departments tend to let go and relax” (HQU 4). It was suggested that quality work should be a continuous process because “accreditation is just a means to see where are you stated, where are you located” (Dean 3), and “you have to move on to get a better rating than before” (QDM 3). QDM 4 also articulated this point:

The problem is that everybody thinks that accreditation is the system. Accreditation is not the system. It is the quality system that must be built before they go for accreditation because accreditation is a certification only. Quality should be the foundation towards accreditation.

The lack of understanding of quality objectives clearly affects quality achievement.

5.3.6 NCAAA Reservations

Figure 6 shows HoDs’ level of satisfaction with NCAAA support on a five-point scale, ranging from extremely satisfied to not satisfied at all. Overall, it seems that a majority of respondents (54.2%, 32) are only partially satisfied with the support they receive from NCAAA, which accords with the qualitative data where the interviewees expressed their discontent with NCAAA’s assistance.

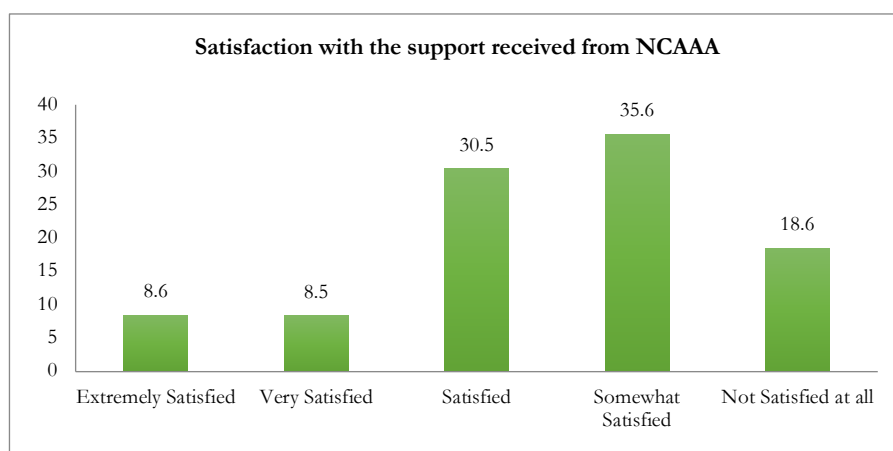


Figure 6: Level of Satisfaction with the Support Received from NCAAA

Many HoDs reported reservations about the standards and requirements of the NCAAA. They stated that only a few of Al-Jawda University's colleges had received academic accreditation from this agency (for general comments about achieved accreditation see Section 5.2.3); most had achieved it from international agencies because the NCAAA's standards "are cumbersome" (HoD 11), "too difficult in terms of understanding" (HoD 7). Moreover, HoDs criticised the NCAAA because its accreditation requirements and standards are taken from other countries, "without taking into consideration the local and cultural context" (HoD 5). It seems that the underlying principles of NCAAA (2013) are contradictory to the actions of the Agency itself. The criticism focused on the paperwork involved as "a principal reason for the deterioration of quality in the university because it is related more to documentation than people's behaviour" (HoD 13). Similarly, Ehlers (2009) emphasised that QA is restricted due to bureaucratic paperwork and procedures and this consequently builds a certain level of resistance.

The NCAAA has eleven main standards, under each of which are different sub-standards containing a number of KPIs. This results in an abundance of paperwork such as course files and reports per term, as well as on an annual basis, and a full report at the end of the year for all courses. Additionally, a huge number of surveys and questionnaires must be reviewed and analysed to discover any shortcomings, and an action plan devised to remedy these for the next term. Thus, it is a continuous process which overwhelms HoDs as they are faced with unfamiliar administrative tasks. Due to this lengthy and complex process, HoDs believed it was difficult to sustain the application of the standards, yet the concerns of staff are not taken into consideration by the NCAAA as mentioned by HoD 4:

We have provided feedback on several occasions, but it is never taken into account. The Standards are supposed to be useful in terms of improving and simplifying the criteria to achieve quality. The NCAAA should make the accreditation simple by going to the root

cause to ensure quality as quick as possible and in the most basic of ways.

Of course, HoD 4's perspective could be challenged on the grounds that quality is neither simple nor basic; however, the application process is seen as overly-complex by academics, who have to complete extended forms and comply with numerous requirements.

Furthermore, the NCAAA's documentation is in English, which many colleges and departments find "too difficult to translate and circulate among all members" (HoD 4). Since the majority of academics are not fluent in English, this acts as a hindrance to "develop the quality culture in the departments" (HoD 2). Yet it must be acknowledged that international accreditation is also in English, so this may simply be an excuse, hiding other fundamental problems. Moreover, the standards are formulated in a general way throughout "without specification according to the disciplines" (HoD 10). They are said to derive from academic disciplines like education, administrative sciences, and business management. Consequently, as noted by HoD 12, they "may be easy for those who studied these disciplines, but quite challenging to understand for engineers and doctors".

NCAAA seems not to provide any awareness-raising programmes for academics in respect of the culture of accreditation and quality achievement. This is compounded by the shortage of training in the universities and colleges on the importance of quality achievement. HoDs also mentioned the lack of representatives in Saudi universities to promote NCAAA activities and criteria. This is echoed by HoD 7 who claims that the NCAAA does not have "adequate human resources to supervise accreditation on time" in various departments of the university. Indeed, HoD 13 confirmed this problem:

If we ask NCAAA to visit our department, they have to be given an appointment, which can take up to one year. This can eventually cause frustration for an HoD or even for academics.

Although the NCAAA offers some training to staff who work on quality related activities in Saudi HEIs, overall, the stakeholders were dissatisfied with this provision since, over a year, NCAAA conduct just six to eight workshops, and this was “not enough because they only take two to three people from each institution” (Vice-Rector). Moreover, they criticised the NCAAA on the basis that their training programmes are designed for people working in quality to fulfil their requirements and “not actually to disseminate the quality culture” (QDM 8).

Stakeholders noted that the NCAAA standards are very difficult to implement, contain “contradictory [information] and repetition” (HQU 5) and that “the complicated structure of NCAAA is another barrier” (QDM 7). They reported that the NCAAA has eleven standards and fifty-eight sub-standards, resulting in more than four hundred measures. Therefore, most departments “complain a lot when it comes to NCAAA accreditation. They [NCAAA] are very demanding” (HQU 3). It was noted that the lengthy and complex process of the NCAAA requirements resulted in negative feelings among stakeholders directly working on quality related assignments. A Vice-Dean of quality reflects on his feelings:

I don't say NC-triple A, I say NC trouble A. Because of a lot of orders, a lot of things. They go into small details and for everything, they need evidence. It's very defined. This is between us - I give this definition to NCAAA - the smartest way to waste time and money. It is a plot. We used to sit for hours with the HoDs to discuss only two items with evidence. It's really crazy and you're going why? And if we're going to do it for each item, oh my God!

Perhaps HoD's 12 suggestion that “Quality needs to be introduced in a more appetising, more relaxed, more encouraging manner” should be given serious consideration.

The reservations regarding minimal training may be related to the reports that NCAAA is “understaffed” (Dean 3) and lacks representatives and local trained professionals in Saudi universities to undertake work related to national accreditation, so the departments

are “suffering” (Dean 2). Therefore, “the pace of national accreditation is very slow” (Dean 3) because NCAAA has limited capacity to meet their targets on accreditation and promote quality achievement. QDM 5 reported, when you send a report to NCAAA, “the reply comes in three, four months’ time. That means it delays the QA mechanism. And they are the quality agency themselves”. The problem is compounded when NCAAA “just want to accredit the programme and that’s it and wait until the end of the fifth year to be accredited again” (QDM 8). Once the programme is accredited, “there is no follow up visit every year to see the progression” (A Vice-Rector). Dean 1 also confirmed that there is relatively little communication with NCAAA: “I have been a dean for two years; I have never had any communication from NCAAA”. QDM 2 highlighted the issue of limited capacity of the NCAAA:

NCAAA is such a small agency and they cannot accommodate all kinds of universities throughout the kingdom. [Al-Jawda] University alone has 120 academic programmes. With a very small mathematical calculation we did with our colleagues here, we estimated that it will take 10 years for the NCAAA to fully accredit all our programmes [...] they just cannot keep the pace really because they are overwhelmed. Even if they don’t say it publicly they are overwhelmed by the amount of work that they need to do as they have very limited resources.

Hence, accreditation was not always regarded as a way forward, particularly when it was felt that there was not enough support from the accrediting body. Therefore, it can be concluded that the involvement of NCAAA in quality achievement in Saudi universities is not necessarily an advantage and that the Agency’s standards and operations may need more attention, in order to improve the processes of quality implementation in Saudi HEIs.

5.3.7 Overcoming Hindrances

Despite perceiving quality achievement as troublesome process and their occasional views that quality was not being achieved, many HoDs seemed to have convinced

themselves that they could overcome any hindrances. It may be that these HoDs were working in departments where senior academics were more collaborative. They may also be working in departments with older academics due to retire soon, taking with them a major impediment to change. This optimism about overcoming difficulties to achieving quality goals is seen in the following quotations: “I do not believe in hindrances” (HoD 3), and “the drawbacks I mentioned do not amount to a major hindrance in terms of achieving quality” (HoD 6). Furthermore, even the obstacles related to financial and power issues were not “to the extent where they would affect the quality” (HoD 9), and “the hurdles and the obstacles we talked about are not by any means impossible to overcome” (HoD 12). It is thought that if an HoD “believes in quality” (HoD 10), “has a talent” (HoD 3), and is “patient and hardworking” (HoD 8), s/he can overcome the hurdles identified and achieve quality with “the minimum resources” (HoD 11). HoD 1 supported these ideas:

All the primary materials are available and if I need something then I would ask the university for it. By no means should we be using finance as the hook on which we place the blame for our failure to implement quality.

A few HoDs stated that, with the passage of time, some hindrances had already been overcome and that others would be reduced in the near future. Two main reasons were offered for this situation. Firstly, some of the older academics who had rejected the quality initiatives had retired, and others would retire soon. Indeed, “in the last five years, an improvement in quality has happened” (HoD 11), in parallel with older academics being replaced with “fresh blood joining the department after finishing their studies abroad” (HoD 11). Secondly, with time and training provided by the university, academics had come to “realise that quality is doable. It does not frighten anybody. It is not as intimidating as they thought it was” (HoD 3). This has occurred as staff gradually became more familiar with the requirements and techniques of quality achievement, and

this greater willingness on their part has removed some of the obstacles preventing HoDs from achieving quality in their departments. HoD 10 spoke of the use of technology among senior academics, saying:

Some of the problems will eventually be dealt with [...] using technology as an example. This issue is only confined to the older members who are about to retire or have already retired, but are still actively engaged. Within two years, this will end, which can be a solution to the problem. The university also provides many training courses to discuss these issues. (HoD 10)

Stakeholders also showed considerable optimism in thinking that hindrances to achieving quality could be overcome simply by putting their faith in Al-Jawda University's system to reduce such barriers. For example, QDM 6 believed that "all the challenges and the problems are on their way to being solved, really, because we have an established system or a mature system to eliminate any emerging problems". Specifically, HQU 1 suggested that these challenges could be overcome: "if there is a provision for appointment of QA professionals, facilitation from DDQ and effective coordination through senior management".

5.4 Summary

To conclude, it is noteworthy that the HoDs and the stakeholders have identified many similar factors that hinder or contribute towards the achievement of quality. They both emphasised the importance of effective leadership, including delegating tasks to colleagues. They noted several factors which could facilitate an HoD to achieve quality, including the availability of qualified staff and teamwork and co-operation among staff at the department and university level. Furthermore, they both acknowledged the role of the DDQ in supporting HoDs to achieve quality in a variety of ways, such as providing training and funding. A few HoDs mentioned that they are empowered to take decisions

in the running of their departments, receiving financial support to enhance training to improve teaching.

However, it is evident that HoDs are experiencing a variety of challenges, including gender segregation of campuses, resulting in poor communication. Both HoDs and the stakeholders observed several obstacles to achieving quality, such as the lack of cooperation among HoDs, limited financial resources and the lack of incentives for staff working in quality-related tasks. They both reported that the main hurdles for HoDs are the lengthy bureaucratic processes in respect of financial and administrative decision-making, which delays quality related initiatives. They criticised the limited administrative authority, especially in hiring and firing under-performing academics, though some stakeholders thought that HoDs have sufficient financial and administrative autonomy to achieve quality in their departments.

The issues with managing academic staff seem to be the most challenging for HoDs and this is intensified by the resistance to change apparent in older academics. There is also the difficulty in recruiting qualified academic and administrative staff. All of these personnel-related factors are seen as hindrances to achieving the quality goals required by the university. In addition, further obstacles are reported as being a lack of clarity and absence of guidance for successful implementation of quality initiatives, as well as an over-emphasis on completing the necessary paperwork, rather than on genuinely working towards a quality culture. Stakeholders criticised Al-Jawda University for constantly wanting to implement new systems, which overburden HoDs and staff in general, although they declare that they have confidence in the university's system in overcoming hindrances related to quality. The stakeholders appear to contradict themselves, when they are critical of the very factor that they suggest should be the way forward for achieving quality. This may be because the stakeholders do not have a complete

understanding of the processes required, or it may be that they prefer handing over full responsibility for quality to the university.

Lastly, both HoDs and stakeholders were critical of NCAAA because their standards are generic and not compatible with local culture. In addition, there was limited support and training, which slowed quality achievement. Despite some stakeholders having positive views about NCAAA standards, many HoDs showed a preference for international accreditation. This may reflect the familiarisation with such accreditation through its use in large international organisations in KSA. Despite the challenges, it is found that the HoDs and the stakeholders are confident of overcoming these hindrances to quality achievement.

The next chapter provides further details of how selection and professional development of HoDs influence their achievement of quality.

Chapter 6

Selection and Professional Development of HoDs

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the online questionnaire and the 36 semi-structured interviews. Together, these findings address the third research question of the study, namely: How does the selection and development of HoDs influence their achievement of quality?

6.2 HoDs' Selection

This theme was investigated using both qualitative and quantitative data and the findings fall under the following sub-themes; selection process for HoDs; motivating and demotivating factors to become an HoD and suggested changes to the existing system.

6.2.1 Selection Process for HoDs

The HoDs expressed a range of opinions on the selection process, which they believed played a substantial role in ensuring that a suitable leader was appointed. All HoDs expressed the view that the role of HoD was extremely important for the functioning of the department and quality achievement, as HoD 1 put it: "All the disasters regarding poor quality performance go back to the method of choosing HoDs". Moreover, HoD 13 highlighted the importance of gauging leadership skills in potential heads and of being assured of the candidate's belief in the need to achieve quality, saying:

Selecting a suitable candidate to be HoD has a major impact on achieving quality [...] s/he can motivate or de-motivate others as well as monitoring and controlling the whole process [...] if the nominee doesn't believe in quality, s/he will have a

detrimental effect on achieving departmental quality and vice versa.

In terms of the actual selection process, HoDs confirmed that up until 2009, the selection of HoDs was conducted through nomination, heads being selected by the Dean of the College from amongst the department's academics. In the absence of a voting system, the Dean would either consult members of the department or take a decision alone. After gaining their approval, the Dean would usually nominate three candidates known for their competence, regardless of their ability to provide a clear strategic plan or develop a programme aligned with the department's ambitions and quality aspirations. The Dean would then send his nominations to the Rector who would make the choice. Generally, this would be the first name on the list unless the University's higher management "had expressed reservations" (HoD 4).

In some instances, the Dean would recommend only one candidate to the Rector if no other individual was deemed suitable. HoD 9 described this situation as follows: "I was the only one really there. I didn't have any background or experience but the dean nominated me and I have been in charge ever since". Appointing someone without relevant experience is not ideal, but, as Bolden et al. (2008a) acknowledge, it is sometimes the only option.

A limited amount of consultation with "the previous HoD or somebody from within the department" (HoD 7) might occur if there was no obvious front-runner. In cases where a nominee was unwilling to accept the position, the Dean would try to persuade him or her as stated by HoD 2: "the dean may call someone or ask other department heads to suggest a suitable person and he then tries to convince him to be an HoD. He will then be in this position for two years, usually". Departmental staff could also be consulted, but such a consultation would be rather informal and limited only to a few academics, as HoD 3 explained:

Before, the dean used to ask [a few of us] “What do you think? Who would be the suitable HoD?” They would give him one, two or three names. Then, he would write a letter to the Rector, saying I would like this person to be department head.

However, the Dean had the final say, as “there is no, let’s say, voting” (HoD 12). The HoDs openly expressed their dissatisfaction with the old selection system because it lacked transparency and was open to abuse through favouritism and nepotism by a Dean.

HoD 14 put this best, saying:

When there is no system for hiring HoDs or Deputy Heads, this could be a problem because sometimes it is personal favours. “You are my friend, I will tell the Dean that you are the suitable person”, that is why people will resist that person in the beginning and it will take time before people will start co-operating with her or with him. And that will influence the quality of course!

Stakeholders also considered the old selection criteria as “not transparent” (DDQM 4), and hence “bad for quality” (DDQM 8). If an HoD is appointed by his/her respective Dean, s/he “can choose whatever s/he wants and faculty members don’t know what’s going on” (Dean 1). Deans selected HoDs “on a social level rather than on what’s best for the department, [... and who’s] not a troublemaker” (DDQM 3). The previous Saudi selection process, as described by the participants, seems also similar to that in Russian HEIs (Mercer and Pogolian, 2013), where an HoD is selected by senior colleagues, which may lead to favouritism.

In order to modernise the heavily-criticised HoD selection process, a new selection system was introduced in Al-Jawda University when they started work on accreditation in 2009. According to participant HoDs, this system established a Selection Committee for each College that consists of staff from different departments experienced in the field of management. Under this new system, academics nominate candidates and these are evaluated by the Selection Committee. Usually, internal interest from the department is

invited via an advertisement on the College website. Academics can apply online while a prospective candidate can nominate him/herself or can be recommended by other colleagues from the department. However, it is noteworthy that applications from outside the department are rarely permissible. In special cases, when the administration struggles to find a Saudi academic to perform an HoD role, a colleague of Saudi origin from outside the department, but from the same college, can be invited to take such a position. It bears repeating that within Saudi HE, it is not permissible for non-Saudi academics to hold a managerial or leading position.

Once all the nominations are in, all academics within a particular department can vote for one or more candidates. The three candidates acquiring the most votes are nominated and in the second stage, the Selection Committee conducts interviews with the top three nominees and evaluates their suitability for the position. Finally, the Committee recommends the list of candidates to the Dean who eventually sends this list in rank order to the Rector, requesting his final approval. However, it is unclear whether this ranking is generated by the Dean, by the Selection Committee or by both. Hence, this may mean that the Dean has relatively little influence over the choice of the candidates, the final decision belonging to the Rector, or conversely, the Dean may influence the decision by sending the list of names in rank order to the Rector. HoD 4 explained the new selection process in the following way:

Currently, there is a Committee in charge of selecting HoDs, as this would be in line with the university's plan to go global. To be eligible for the HoD position, a candidate can either nominate him/herself or be nominated by his/her colleagues. Then, after examining the documents, an interview would follow before submitting the papers to the Dean and then to the Rector.

Although selection criteria for the HoD role are well established in the literature (see Van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003; Graham and Benoit, 2004; Bland et al., 2005; Blackmore

and Blackwell, 2006; Bryman, 2007; Jones, 2011; Parrish, 2015), they seem to be missing in the Al-Jawda University documentation. This may be because such criteria have not yet been approved at the higher managerial level and published. Therefore, I had to rely on information revealed by my participants.

Moving to a more thorough selection process could be interpreted as one small step towards the professionalisation of the role noted by Deem (2000) and Smith (2007) in some post-1992 UK universities. That said, other features of professionalisation identified by Deem (2000) (e.g. financial incentives and external advertising) were not found at the university. However, fourteen (out of fifteen) HoDs indicated several advantages to the new process. Firstly, the involvement of the Selection Committee in the decision-making process was seen to reduce the personal bias evident in the former process as it involves experts from different departments who determine the appropriateness of a candidate. Secondly, HoDs perceived the new system as more participatory since all academics have an equal opportunity to compete for the position and to nominate other colleagues in the department, whereas, previously, the Dean would hand-pick only one to three academics, thereby precluding others from applying for the post. HoDs 2 and 15 both praised the new arrangements, saying:

It's a good system because it gives you the right to nominate yourself, unlike in the past when favouritism was possible.
(HoD 2)

It helps in the sense that they weren't just chosen [...] they have been nominated, it's not even from the Rector [...] I think it is good because then everyone is involved in choosing that person. (HoD 15)

Thirdly, eight HoDs thought the new system promoted greater staff support and teamwork because academics could nominate a potential candidate. HoDs further emphasised that the system based on departmental nomination can become “a source of

comfort for the HoD” (HoD 7) because the departmental staff “have some kind of say about who should be there as he will represent their issues very well in the college and as a profession” (HoD 12), as it is felt that more than half of the staff should accept him/her. Since colleagues are best informed about his/her suitability for the post, this “gives him confidence in performing his role” (HoD 8).

Seven HoDs appreciated the new system on the grounds that it helps to reduce conflicts between the HoD and academics, as had been the case under the old system:

Recently, the university has been trying to avoid trouble. If someone was nominated as an HoD, there might be a disagreement on his candidacy by the majority of the department academics. This could create tensions and stagnation in the department, and negatively affect the day-to-day running of the meetings and academic activities. Things could escalate and reach the Minister of HE for a decision, but it is not always the case that he would be able to solve the issue. This is exactly what happened to us due to lack of agreement on the previous HoD [...] the HoD cannot take major decisions without a meeting with more than 50% of the departmental staff [...] an unpopular HoD is more likely to face several challenges from other academics who would do all it takes to thwart his progress [...] it would take him/her ages to achieve what they could do in a matter of days because of such obstacles. (HoD 6)

In summary, HoDs praised the new system and thought that it was fairer because of its combination of recommendations from other academics and interviews of the candidate by the Selection Committee. Four HoDs found that the Committee’s evaluation of candidates’ interpersonal and academic abilities helped to prevent bias and lobbying. HoD 11 believed that “these two processes are important and are improving the process of selection”. Moreover, some HoDs referred to the greater sophistication of the new selection system and its emphasis on recruitment criteria including academic qualifications, experience, and skills needed to apply for the position. This requires an applicant to be a PhD holder and have the rank of Assistant Professor or above, and to

demonstrate good performance in research; however, it pertinent to mention that formal criteria for HoD selection seemed inaccessible on Al-Jawda University website. HoD 1 put this best:

His [HoD] rank should be Assistant Professor or more and s/he has to be among the most distinguished teachers. It goes back to the list of the regulations/bylaw which is general and that's why the Selection Committee is there to make the decision based on its experience and its knowledge about the performance of that person - whether s/he is capable or not.

Figure 7 shows that most HoDs (88.1%, 52 out of 59) are currently PhD holders, with just 11.9% (7) having a Master's qualification. The higher percentage in the PhD qualification is understandable as it is preferable for HoDs in Saudi HE to be qualified at the doctoral level. In practice, when PhDs holders are not available, an academic with a Master's degree can assume the role of an HoD. This deviates from the opinions of the interviewed HoDs in the qualitative data where they indicated that it is a requirement for a HoD position to have a PhD and a rank of Assistant professor or above.

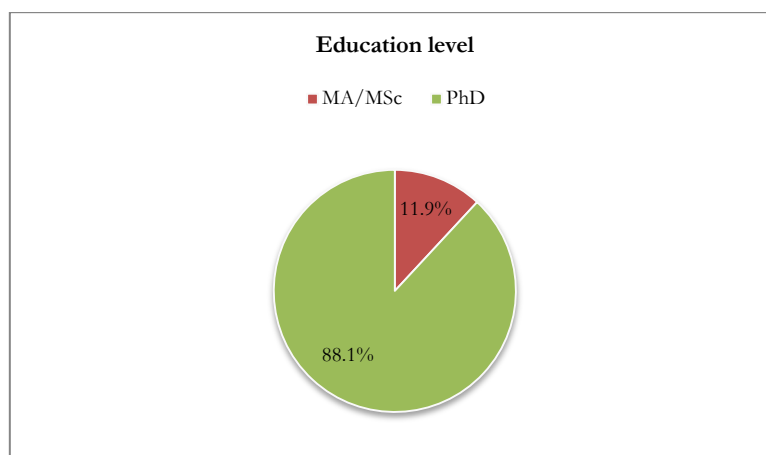


Figure 7: Education Level

Despite HoD 1's comment about being "amongst the most distinguished teachers", teaching ability does not figure prominently. Instead, there is a preference for leadership features, such as having a vision and team building abilities.

HoDs and the stakeholders had different views about how much the selection process emphasised a commitment to QA. The HoDs generally thought that being familiar with the concept of quality and being keen to enhance the quality of the department made a difference, as explained by HoDs 5 and 14:

The Committee checked whether I believed in quality or not before they asked me to the interview. And I remember the Dean got the sense that I am interested in quality. He did not explicitly say that, but I felt it. (HoD 5)

Because I was part of the DQC and familiar with quality at that time, they were fine with it because they knew that I would not just come and be ignorant of everything. (HoD 14)

In contrast, the stakeholders said there is an insufficient emphasis on quality in the HoD selection criteria. HQU 1 said:

We might find a very hard working person, but he may know nothing about quality and not support efforts to attain it either because he comes from a background that has had nothing to do with quality or because he has negative views when it comes to working towards quality. So, when HoDs are selected, quality is not one of the criteria that they [Selection Committee members] look for.

Despite this, the stakeholders expressed their satisfaction with the introduction of voting and performance-based criteria for nominating HoDs. They believed that the academics' involvement had made the process "fair and objective" (DDQM 6). They argued that, if the staff elect their HoD, "that means they believe in him, they put him in charge and they work with him better" (DDQM 1). A former Rector who introduced the new selection system for HoDs in the University confirmed the views of HoDs as stated above that this system is aligned with global trends and is being practised in world-class universities like Harvard, MIT or Stanford. Moreover, the new system is performance-oriented and allows academics to assess the performance of their HoDs "using systematic and institutionalised assessment methods" (a former Rector). This respondent

further added that the re-election of an HoD is also based on an evaluation of the achievement of the plan submitted at the time of his/her previous nomination. It needs to be noted though that the frequency of HoDs re-election has not been established and depends on a number of individual factors. Therefore, the new selection system that has been implemented in Al-Jawda University is considered a unique practice in the KSA.

Turning to the questionnaire data, the highest number of HoDs were appointed by senior management i.e. 64.4% (38 HoDs) whereas 28.8% (17) were nominated by colleagues. Although two responses were left blank, the comment revealed that the participants were nominated by colleagues (see Figure 8)

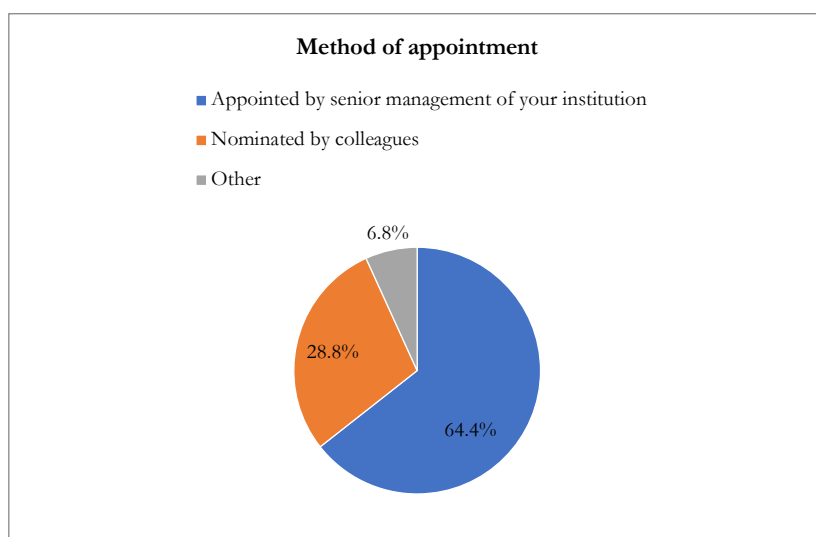


Figure 8: Method of Appointment

It appears that the proportion of HoDs appointed by management is higher in the questionnaire data than in the interview data where the interviewees appreciated the greater involvement of colleagues in HoDs' selection. This suggests that, in cases where academics do not find the HoD position attractive, the older system is implemented and HoDs are appointed by senior management. Alternatively, since this question did not allow the respondents to tick more than one box, it could refer to both processes, i.e.

those who were appointed by senior management were nominated by colleagues at an earlier stage.

6.2.2 Limitations to New Selection Process

It is noteworthy that the previous system still applies whenever there are no volunteers for the role. HoD 11 stated that when there is “no desire to take up such position, a recommendation by the Dean is the best option”. HoD 4 also stated that the new system “has limited success in some colleges” as “most academics prefer teaching and research over managerial responsibilities”, hence, “the old selection process remains predominant in some departments”. Stakeholders concurred that if there was little interest in becoming an HoD, the new selection system was neglected. If “the pool itself is not big enough to allow for such a very advanced selection process to be implemented” (DDQM 2), thus, “we do not apply the selection criteria and we do not adhere to the current appointment system” (a Vice-Rector).

Furthermore, HoDs identified some shortcomings of the new selection process, especially the fact that there is no scope for evaluating HoD candidates on leadership training, as the latter is virtually non-existent. It was believed that such serious shortcomings should be addressed by the university for HoDs to be well-prepared before taking on the role. This would ensure the recruitment of HoDs who were already familiar with departmental goals and quality initiatives:

In order to get the position, they [the University] should put conditions, such as attending training about the HoD role and quality goals [...] I think it will make it more effective and more efficient to meet the departmental goals [...] and every faculty member must attend these training courses in order to be eligible to be an HoD. (HoD 5)

Those candidates with headship aspirations might welcome preparatory leadership courses but this might not generate sufficient interest to make the courses worthwhile.

Moreover, making the candidate's performance on a training programme part of the selection process has practical implications and some potential candidates may be deterred by this additional hurdle.

Additionally, three HoDs mentioned that while recommendations by academics show the popularity of a nominee among his/her colleagues and their willingness to work with him/her, this can have the disadvantage of encouraging nepotism and personal favours for the eventual decision "depends on who is the favoured person by the Dean or Vice-dean" (HoD 13). This potential disadvantage was also highlighted by HoD 7, who reported that "some of the academics might promote someone who's a good friend to them, for example, someone who isn't qualified to do the job". This implies that even the current selection process does not guarantee the suitability and qualifications of the selected HoD.

Likewise, some stakeholders held negative views about the current selection system. For example, they found the voting system to be challenging, in that it may promote nepotism as mentioned by DDQM 4 who said, "it depends on who you know" rather than on "whether that person is qualified or not", which means the focus is not on "seeking what's best for the department" (DDQM 6). It was found that although some academics were appointed as HoDs because of their high competence in their subject area, "they didn't have strong management skills" (DDQM 3).

Clearly, the new selection process, whilst seen as an improvement on its predecessor, retains some disadvantages.

6.2.3 Motivation to Become an HoD

HoDs were given eight common motivators to rank on a five-point scale (5=extremely motivating, 1=not motivating at all). As shown in Table 11, HoDs view most of these

factors as motivators, except for “financial return” 10% (6). The strongest motivating factor, however, is “giving something back to the community/society” 85% (50) and a close second and third are “strong aspirations to reform the department” 81% (48) and “being able to maintain high standards within the department” 78% (46).

Table 11: Motivating Factors for Becoming HoDs

Motivating factor Rank	1	2	3	4	5	Total (4+5)	Rank
Giving back to the community/society	1	3	5	17	33	50	1
	2%	5%	9%	29%	56%	85%	
Strong aspirations to reform the department		1	10	10	38	48	2
		2%	17%	17%	64%	81%	
Being able to maintain high standards within the department	3		10	22	24	46	3
	5%		17%	37%	41%	78%	
Job satisfaction/sense of personal achievement	1	6	7	18	27	45	4
	2%	10%	12%	31%	46%	76%	
Being able to deal with new challenges	1	4	14	26	14	40	5
	2%	7%	24%	44%	24%	68%	
Being a leader	4	5	12	23	15	38	6
	7%	9%	20%	39%	25%	64%	
Professional autonomy/implementing own vision	2	5	17	23	12	35	7
	3%	9%	29%	39%	20%	59%	
Financial return	29	14	10	5	1	6	8
	49%	24%	17%	9%	2%	10%	

Respondents indicated that they were proud to be working for a prestigious establishment such as Al-Jawda University and wanted to be part of its success: “I want [X] Department to be the best university in the Middle East because it can become one due to the support it receives at all levels.” This motivating factor for becoming an HoD was also shown in other studies, for example, in how HoDs had a feeling of empowerment that they could bring change to their department in the UK, as identified by Hellawell and Hancock (2001), and irrespective of the need for staff development as

mentioned by Bryman (2007) and Floyd (2012). Others, similarly to Hellawell and Hancock (2001), stated that they were motivated by their desire to make a difference in their departments: “One of the major factors for accepting the role of an HoD is my dissatisfaction with the current conditions of the department” HoD 4, for instance, said he was inspired by a personal vision and passion to “leave a legacy as an HoD”. This was similar to what Smith (2005) had found. Furthermore, HoD 1 wanted to achieve a certain milestone, saying “I want them to say that we got accreditation during my tenure”. HoD 5 mentioned similar motivations as follows:

I want to make history [...] when I was an HoD, I accomplished accreditation or moved the quality level in our department from this point to this point. So, this is the only encouragement that I have got.

Furthermore, some HoDs emphasised that academics could have very personal motivations towards the role as there were no great incentives to be an HoD (see Section 6.2.4) unless one wanted to “show off” (HoD 9), “have power” (HoD 10), “make trouble for other staff” (HoD 3) or “have a plan in your mind to achieve” (HoD 14).

The existing CoHE (1998) regulations were meant to incentivise the position by reducing the teaching load to three hours a week in comparison to twelve or sixteen hours for ordinary academics. According to the participants, this seems not to have had the desired effect, however. According to the HoDs, the workload has not been reduced; instead, it has been filled with many other extra non-teaching, administrative tasks. This was just one of the demotivating factors to which we now turn.

6.2.4 Demotivating Factors

Nine HoDs identified their post as being difficult, using words like “tough” (HoD 12), “challenging” (HoD 14) or “time-consuming” (HoD 7). Perceptions that the HoD position would negatively affect their core academic work (Sotirakou, 2004; Floyd, 2012)

were confirmed by HoD 7 who mentioned that “it keeps you away from doing research”. The HoDs also perceived, in line with Floyd's (2012) findings, that the role was not appropriately rewarded, with HoD 4 saying that it came with “an excessive workload unmatched by significant payments” and others emphasising that it was “too much work and too much responsibility for little compensation” (HoD 12). According to the HoDs, the university pays them an additional 1,500 Riyal, per month, roughly 3% to 6% of their basic salary, depending on their academic experience, but it is seen as “nothing, a headache [and] nobody wants to be department head” (HoD 3). In addition to these factors, HoD 11 explained that most academics prefer to be involved in academic and industry-related consultancy work as this is more financially rewarding than becoming an HoD:

Academics tend to decline HoD position offers because they don't see the post as attractive enough; it is too demanding as well as time-consuming without offering much in revenue. Most of the academic staff opt out to focus on research or consultancy opportunities in industry. That's why they hardly see it justifiable to extend their working load. (HoD 11)

It was reported that several HoDs were eventually persuaded to accept the position because the University was “in desperate need of different HoDs” (HoD 7). In the case of HoD 6, both intrinsic and extrinsic factors were influential.

I was nominated by my colleagues, and I agreed for two reasons: the first was that the department was in an appalling condition and almost no longer functioning and I wanted to reverse that. The second reason - and I hope I will not be misunderstood as being arrogant – why I insisted to be among the nominees, was that most of the other candidates were very under-qualified, and hence they would not have been able to achieve anything significant.

The stakeholders confirmed that the HoD position is a “hectic role” (Vice-Dean), “so demanding with no powers” (Dean 2), “not appreciated” (Dean 1) and “not supported” (HQU 3) at all levels of the University. Dean 3 added that “everyone keeps enquiring

with him [HoD] about different matters as if he was a secretary”. DDQM 2 summarised and confirmed the factors that discourage academics from taking up the HoD’s role:

Because colleagues know the amount of responsibility that would be required from them, the amount of effort that they need to make. In many academics’ views, this is not a very good incentive for them to make such an effort and accept such a burden. Many of them can do this but they see that incentives are not really very high.

As a result, the University appears to be struggling to find academics who are experienced in administration and willing to assume the HoD role. Dean 1 stated, “we do not pick the right person sometimes” and “the one who is available is approached and convinced by his Dean” (Vice-Dean). This suggests that “there is some kind of coercion and peer pressure in the process of appointing HoDs” (Dean 3). The idea of coercion is similar to the views expressed by HoDs who confirmed that they are sometimes pushed to assume the role as the University is “in desperate need of different HoDs”. In some instance, they are left with no choice but to renew the contracts of underperforming HoDs, as confirmed by Dean 2:

I have five HoDs. Three of them are excellent. I give them 100%, they do their job properly, on time, everything. But I have two HoDs, and I’m not happy with them. So, you’re going to ask me, ‘Why, are you not happy with them and you keep them as HoDs?’ I said, ‘I keep them because I have no other choices. The other choices are worse than them.’

However, HoDs offered a number of useful suggestions to improve the current selection process, as indicated in the following section.

6.2.5 Suggestions for Changing the Current Selection Process

The majority of HoDs believed the selection of HoDs to be very important and not given sufficient attention by the University. They believed many academics were not

suitable for the role and, in order to avoid poor appointments, the University should have a clearer HoD recruitment and preparation plan. HoD 13 articulated this:

HoDs must be assigned carefully. Some academics are not suitable to be the HoD [...] the University should have a clear plan to assign or to improve the capability of the people in that administrative position. This position needs a person who can deal with other staff. I think managing human resources is the most difficult type of management.

Likewise, stakeholders suggested that “transparency and clearly defined criteria are required in the selection process. Everybody needs to know that these are the criteria, and quality should be one of those criteria” (HQU 1). This could indicate a certain misunderstanding on the part of the interviewees as the current system with committees, advertising of roles and interviews for particular positions seems to have adequate levels of transparency.

Seven HoDs said the selection system should evaluate the competence and skills of the nominees, whilst simultaneously acknowledging that often no-one wanted to do the job. HoD 12 provides an example of this. On the one hand, he says many departments struggle to find any suitable HoD as this is not a position that many well-qualified academics seem to want, but, on the other, he believes more effort should be put into selecting highly-qualified HoDs:

The HoD should be chosen on merit. Therefore, the selection process needs to take into consideration, seniority, academic achievement, administrative expertise and how well this person can co-ordinate and facilitate work with his fellow faculty members. Because there are many examples that show that departments were almost dissolved because of bad leadership. (HoD 12)

Five HoDs also noted that, apart from merit, a good working relationship between the HoD and the respective Dean was important for the smooth operation of the department. Not surprisingly, much emphasis was placed by the HoDs on the need to

assess the compatibility of a nominee with the relevant Dean. Although this is a rather subjective judgement, HoD 1 stressed the importance of finding the right personality and suggested the introduction of both objective and subjective selection criteria:

In the system that we have, it is really hard to work with a dean who dislikes you. And so, the use of both objective, specific and accurate criteria, and subjective references is greatly needed. It is not a matter of $1+1=2$.

Eleven HoDs suggested that when evaluating the interpersonal characteristics and leadership abilities of a candidate, there should be a focus on features such as: vision, a co-operative attitude, open-mindedness, respect for other colleagues, the ability to change and motivate people to work, and the ability to deal with challenging situations. In the literature on HoDs selection, similar criteria have been identified, for instance, credibility and academic capability (Bolden et al., 2008a), effective analytical and interpersonal skills (Blackmore and Blackwell, 2006), a potential to act as a role model for others in the department (Van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003) and an ability to facilitate change (Graham and Benoit, 2004; Bland et al., 2005). However, an emphasis on including ‘quality achievement’ seems unique to the studied case, which may be due to the current intense focus on the concept of quality at the University.

Nevertheless, the stakeholders stated that, since HoDs do not possess strong management skills, the university should deliver a course every semester “for all the newly-appointed HoDs” (DDQM 5). This seems to be a more sensible suggestion than pre-appointment training, given the initial lack of interest in the position.

In terms of succession planning, an important suggestion by five HoDs was that the University should establish a system of assigning to each department a deputy HoD who would have already been chosen as an HoD elect. Hence, at the end of an HoD’s term, the deputy would be able to fill the position immediately and with adequate preparation.

This would mirror the successful policy of shadowing adopted by the University of Nevada Las Vegas (Wolverton et al., 2005). HoD 14 indicated the benefits of this proposal saying that “a department would not have to suffer every time a new HoD is appointed” and HoD 11 noted that without prior experience “it takes a lot to know what is expected of you”. Therefore, this practice would be helpful in training academics before assuming the HoD position, thus ensuring the smooth running of the department (Wolverton et al., 2005):

When you have a deputy within the department, you get somebody who’s really keen and s/he can be the right person for the job in addition, to the HoD. S/he will gain experience with time because at one stage you will have to leave and s/he will be in charge. So, the deputy will have some kind of experience before s/he becomes HoD because s/he’s already involved. (HoD 9)

It was also suggested that in contrast to the current selection system, which only permits Saudi nationals already working at the university to be considered for the HoD position, HoDs should be hired through an open competitive process. This would allow equally qualified individuals with similar academic specialisations from other national and international universities to apply and be considered as candidates. Given that in some departments it is difficult to find a suitable Saudi national willing to take up the HoD position, the university has two choices either they can allow a non- national to be HoD or they can allow Saudi national from other universities to take such a position:

Since the rule is that only the locals from the same university can be the HoD and the expats and the locals from other universities cannot be in this position, opening the HoD post to any qualified professional would be helpful in creating competition. Then there would be a question of quality as well. At the moment, there is no question of selection. There is a question of option only, which is the available option? (DDQM 1)

Furthermore, the need for greater financial compensation and extended administrative power was also highlighted. Indeed, it was believed that by making the HoD position more competitive by incentivising it with a higher salary and more power, departments would be able to achieve better quality in their outputs:

If the appointment of HoD were competitive by virtue of proper incentives, and people had to fight to be department head, then it would be open for anybody. Of course, they have to be within the specialty of that department, but could be from X or Y university or even from outside the Kingdom [...] [and] if it was a paid job, with a competitive salary and with powers and budget for that department head, that would be another story. That would attract good quality applicants. (HoD 3)

Similarly, some stakeholders emphasised the need to make the position of HoDs more attractive by increasing the financial incentives and granting more authority to the role. A Vice-Rector said that HoDs “should get an extra 25% of salary in order to encourage people to apply for this position” while Dean 3 emphasised that HoDs should have “greater financial and administrative autonomy”. Such incentives were believed to “encourage experienced and good people in the department to take charge” (Dean 1) and help them to “perform much better” (DDQM 2).

Finally, extending the tenure of HoDs was advocated by six HoDs who criticised the existing two-year tenure for being too short, given that eight of the 24 months were taken up with holidays. As HoD 6 put it: “in order to achieve any plan you need two years as a foundation and another two in order to achieve the plan”. They were in favour of a four-year term of office although they warned that “the psychological burden on the other staff would increase” (HoD 7) if an “unsuitable person was chosen” (HoD 2). To avoid such a situation, the HoDs suggested a two-year performance-based renewable term of office. However, it is pertinent to mention that this system is already in place. It means that not all HoDs are fully aware of the current selection process.

The stakeholders expressed similar concerns about the two-year term of office. According to HQU 3 “the problem is the rotation and changing of them [HoDs]”, thereby, the “turnover is very high for HoDs” (DDQM 7). This limited duration does not allow HoDs to take long-term initiative on quality, because “when they have just got to know the job very well, they are changed” (HQU 1). This is particularly problematic when a new HoD takes over and changes the policy, building his/her own team to work on quality initiatives because the direction and continuity of previous good work is broken. According to DDQM 8, “ongoing change of HoDs is an administrative problem that causes some kind of a flurry, then a pause, and then another flurry”. Moreover, DDQM 4 explained the negative impact of the short tenure of HoDs, saying “changing the leadership position can take a department backwards or forward, which affects quality”. Similar disadvantages have been noted in UK HE with regard to HoD rotation and lack of continuity (Deem, 2000), leading to the loss of managerial development and lower efficiency in managing the department (Bolden et al., 2014).

Stakeholders also recommended that “the period for the HoD be extended to five years [as] less than this would be problematic for quality achievement” (DDQM 7). It was further suggested that “continuity of policies in the department should be independent of people” (a Vice-Dean). Thus, the University must develop “a mechanism or a Standard Operating Procedure (SAP) which is fixed for a department so that no matter whether the head is changed or not, the SOP exists” (DDQM 5).

6.3 Professional Development of HoDs

The issue of professional development of HoDs was investigated in the questionnaire and the interviews and generated four sub-themes as follows: opportunities for professional development, HoDs’ perception of training, benefits of training, and suggestions for improving HoDs’ professional development.

6.3.1 Opportunities for Professional Development

An analysis of the data revealed that professional development opportunities are generally referred to as ‘training’. This is the main vehicle by which HoDs formally learn about their role and issues related to implementing quality. The inclusion of training is part of the University’s vision and strategy to achieve the desired outcomes by 2030. Such an approach to staff development, similar to the UK, clearly shows an alignment between the University’s strategy and HE policy (Burgoyne et al., 2009; Inman, 2009).

All HoDs mentioned the various local, regional, and international training opportunities currently provided by the university, which had not always been the case. The opportunities at Al-Jawda University are offered by DDQ and are mentioned on the university’s main website, which is accessible to all staff members. The training is delivered mainly by local professional speakers and trainers. In the summer, special training is offered for academics in management positions, including HoDs. According to the HoDs, this training focuses on administration, negotiation, documentation, publication, quality implementation and accreditation. It would appear not to include the type of coaching, mentoring and job shadowing available in UK HE (Bolden et al., 2008; Burgoyne et al., 2009). The absence of those three elements of professional development in Saudi suggests that there is scope for improvement in the staff development programmes at Al-Jawda University.

Most HoDs stated that the University encourages staff to attend non-compulsory training sessions “to ensure that the appropriate knowledge of quality application is instilled in the employee” (HoD 4), which may be seen as a kind of contradiction as optional training is less likely to guarantee consistent dissemination of relevant knowledge among academics. Similarly, respondents to the questionnaire also commented that Al-Jawda University is currently promoting workshops, lectures and

special courses to help HoDs manage the various administrative and academic situations they may face.

The stakeholders likewise stated that, compared to the past, there are now several training opportunities for HoDs to enhance their professional skills. It was reported that the University has a very efficient DDQ. HQU 4 said “Quality Deanship do a lot of programmes, for leadership and quality, even medical education.”. DDQM 6 highlighted that “the University has a summer programme to build the capacity of its HoDs abroad [...] including an annual Cardiff training programme on quality in the UK”. Stakeholders also agreed with HoDs and stated that training courses are “not obligatory” (HQC 1) and that the University “does not compel HoDs to take such training courses” (HQU 1).

In addition to local training opportunities, HoDs may also attend international courses and study for qualifications. However, in order to be entitled to go abroad for training, HoDs must fulfil the CoHE (1998) regulations, which require the conference or workshop to be aligned with the attendee’s academic discipline or current role. It was also found that the university’s regulations encourage HoDs to undergo training offered by DDQ, by introducing a requirement to attend at least 36 hours of internal training sessions in their discipline, quality and leadership before granting approval to attend international conferences; so “if you reach a certain number of hours by attending internal courses, you will be allowed to travel abroad for conferences or courses” (HoD 2). This is an example of what HoD 5 had taken advantage of:

As an HoD I had some leadership training. I just attended a course in May at Atlantic Florida State University. It was about leadership in HE, and one of the aspects of this training course was teaching quality, and academic leadership quality. They talked about how to increase quality in your organisation, how to improve the performance of your department.

Nevertheless, HoDs identified poor attendance at the training sessions on offer as a university-wide issue which also affected individual HoDs. Ten HoDs said they did not have time to attend training because they were “extremely busy” (HoD 11), perhaps more so than senior leaders such as the Dean and Vice-Dean, and “working from 8:00am to 5:00pm or [even] 8:00pm” (HoD 8). There was also a worry about being absent from the department because “once a HoD is not there [laughter] it’s difficult to run the department” (HoD 15). According to HoD 14, “the HoD has to juggle a lot. It can be frustrating at times. There were days when I could not read a book, or read an article because the work is just overwhelming”. The lack of time and administrative duties that prevent HoDs from attending training courses were already discussed as hindrances to achieving quality (see Section 5.3.2) and should be given serious consideration if professional training is going to be a genuine opportunity for development (Söderhjelm et al., 2016).

In order to establish who should be responsible for HoDs’ professional development, the respondents to the survey were provided with six choices (as per Figure 9). Two thirds (40) identified the institution, whereas less than one in five (11) identified NCAAA.

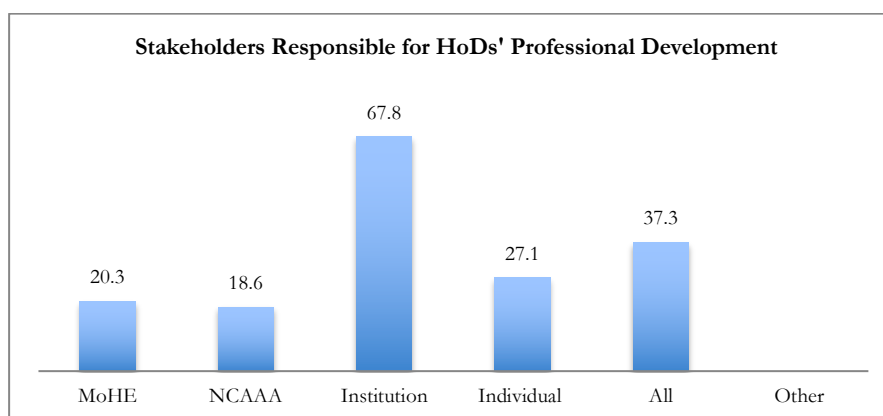


Figure 9: Stakeholders Responsible for HoDs' Professional Development

Many of the HoDs did not receive any specialised professional training before taking up their role, it remains debateable whether HoDs would attend training sessions arranged for them, given how much they complain about a lack of time.

6.3.2 HoDs' Perception of Training before and after Commencing the Role

Despite the importance of training for HoDs, twelve of the fifteen interviewed HoDs stated that they had not received any training to equip them to be heads before they actually stepped into their new roles because “there’s no special training to prepare an academic to be an HoD” (HoD 1). This is similar to the research studies conducted by Deem (2000), Johnson (2002) and Preston and Price (2012) in the UK and Mercer and Pogolian (2012) in Russia in which the authors cited examples of minimal training and limited support which resulted in academics not being clear about their roles. Four HoDs claimed to have enhanced their administrative skills purely through ‘learning on the job’, a finding also noted by Inman (2009) in the UK chartered universities and Anderson and Johnson (2006). The following quote is indicative of this view:

When I was put in charge, I only had teaching experience. I had no administrative experience. Most people only have this experience. So, it develops as time goes on, you gain experience and the job starts to be much easier. (HoD 9)

Most importantly, a majority of the questionnaire respondents (61%, 36) indicated that they had not received any training at all, either before or after commencing the role (see Figure 10).

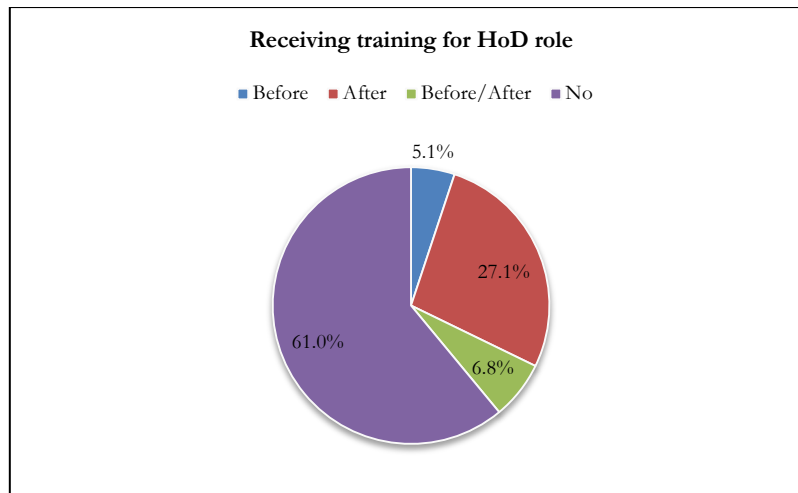


Figure 10: Receiving Training for HoD Role

A former Rector confirmed that HoDs are normally just provided with a manual when they start the job and that “there is no programme designed specifically to train HoDs before taking up their role”. He added that HoDs “learn and gain experience as time goes as they are immersed in their role”, which also concurs with Anderson and Johnson (2006) and Inman (2009) who emphasised that scarce learning opportunities lead to HoDs learning the on the job. A Vice-Dean stated: “HoDs search for themselves here and there, and ask the Dean or Vice-Dean or other colleagues, previous HoD, what to do and what not to do”. HQU 3 reported, “there is no deliberate effort to train HoDs towards quality before or straight after taking up the position”. HoDs are selected from the pool of academics who may have good performance in their relevant academic field, but not in the management skills needed to run the operational and administrative activities of a department. Dean 2, who heads a College with five HoDs, clarified that an academic or, specifically, an HoD “might be a good professor in his profession, but not a good manager”. It was also noted by HQU 2 that “most of the HoDs come from teaching courses and dealing with students, so they don’t have any administrative background.”

Nonetheless, three HoDs stated that they had been given training opportunities in leadership and quality, both before and after becoming HoDs but only because they were working as Head of the DQC or within the College Quality Unit (CQU) and such training was mandatory. This begs the question of whether quality will improve and/or will be maintained if the training remains optional. In this respect, HoD 14 confirmed that:

I was chairing that committee [and] received training from DDQ about what are the standards, how to fill in forms, how to do reports on the department etc.

HoD 6, who was also the Head of the CQU, talked about the “really useful” training he had received before commencing the HoD role. It had covered leadership, IT, accreditation, and student counselling. Moreover, HoD 4, as Head of the CQU, strongly believed that his participation in training initiatives before and after commencing the role of HoD had familiarised him with the expectations of the role and the requirements of quality. He said:

My awareness of the whole process of quality and the culture of quality started when I attended some of the courses and workshops related to the issue of quality when I was the Head of CQU in our college. I would say that this helped me so much when I became HoD. This is because it improved my understanding of my job description and what my position entailed in terms of achieving the department’s quality requirements.

In terms of professional development after becoming an HoD, thirteen of the fifteen HoDs claimed to have enhanced their knowledge by attending internal and international training and workshops. These HoDs received training in a number of areas, which were largely related to administrative tasks, leadership development, managerial skills and “national and American accreditation courses” (HoD 11).

Nevertheless, two HoDs had not received any training either prior to or after commencing their appointment as heads and questioned the ability of leadership training to actually help HoDs perform their roles effectively. In line with Brungardt (1996), who believes that leadership characteristics are innate, they argued that:

There's no amount of courses or training that can take somebody who is potentially a bad HoD and make him become a good one [...] You have to select somebody who is an academic; somebody who has good judgement [...] You are a HoD of your equals. Therefore, it is a very tricky job. It is a very delicate job. And if somebody does not have the qualities to begin with, I don't think a course or training will be enough. (HoD 12)

To run a department, there are inherent characteristics in the person and there are learned characteristics. So sometimes as a leader, they say you have to be born as a leader. And sometimes you can enhance that by training. But sometimes if you do not have it, you do not have it. (HoD 3)

Since self-esteem is related to both inherent and taught leadership features, the HoDs were also asked to indicate their level of confidence in performing their role on a five-point scale, ranging from extremely confident to not confident at all. It is clear from Figure 11 that two third of the HoDs (39 out of 59) were extremely confident and none of them admitted an apparent lack of confidence in performing their role. It seems that regardless of the fact that a vast majority of HoDs did not receive much training, their level of confidence in performing the role remains high. This high level of self-esteem further confirms the confidence in overcoming QA departmental obstacles that HoDs reported in Chapter 5.

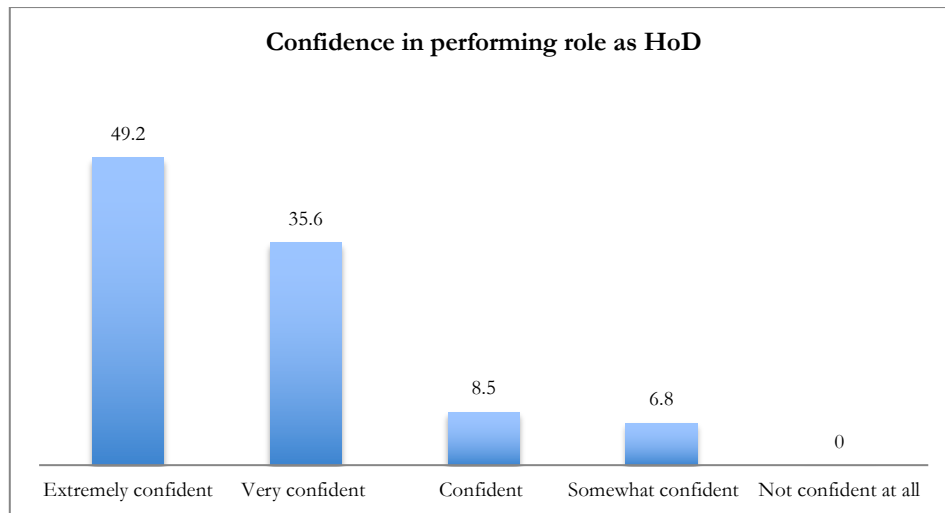


Figure 11: Confidence in Performing Role as HoD

Although perceptions of the training received prior to and after commencing the HoD role vary, the need for professional development is undisputed.

6.3.3 Benefits of Training

Most of the HoDs perceived training as a key driver of quality that enhanced their understanding of certain issues and their motivation to tackle them. Input from external professionals was welcomed, as was the opportunity to debate with colleagues and learn from the experiences of other HoDs. Similar findings by Floyd and Dimmock (2011) emphasise that HoDs require professional development to aid their structuring of the personal and professional identities needed for the post. The following quote is also indicative of such perceptions among the majority of the participating HoDs:

I have learnt so much from accreditation courses [...] we had so many concerns about seeming ambiguities [...] but through these courses and the debates we engaged in with others during these course, we managed to find some answers and to benefit from others' experience, which has been extremely useful for us. (HoD 7)

Moreover, training abroad was useful in gaining international perspectives on leadership and quality achievement. For example, HoD11 found the courses in the US and Britain “quite helpful” in developing certain qualities, whilst HoD 5 said his training in the USA

“had increased his commitment to achieving quality”. The training was perceived as useful, not only for performing quality-related roles, but also in developing leadership skills. HoD 14, for example, spoke of learning when and how to delegate, a skill she felt had helped her to improve the performance of the department. Similarly, HoD 11 further highlighted the benefits of training in the development of leadership skills:

There is also the added value from attending courses for the development of managerial and leadership skills, as we have learnt various skills, especially interpersonal communication with colleagues, students and the top leadership of the University such as the Dean; in addition to time management skills, which have all been highly beneficial.

In addition to the benefits derived from training delivered by professionals, HoDs also benefited from sharing their “personal and professional experiences as experienced people usually do during the courses” (HoD 2). HoD 3 voiced a strong appreciation for a workshop where every HoD shared “tips for good practice in leading his department”. This was seen to contribute towards achieving the aims of training, since it involved interaction, rather than simply reading printed training material. HoD 6 underlined the advantages of such an approach, saying:

I find the interaction and collaboration with other colleagues from other disciplines and backgrounds to be quite interesting and in itself commendable. They are all well-experienced in their own field of work and they raise good questions that are greatly beneficial.

Although the benefits of professional development are well established in literature and the majority of the HoDs enunciated them, a few criticised the university’s training provision and the attendees. For example, HoD 6 thought that those who attended international training were doing so “just to make up the numbers” and to have something to “add to their personal CV”, without giving consideration to the quality of training. Furthermore, he criticised training providers for being disinterested in the

quality of the training being offered, considering it purely for “money-making purposes”. He further observed that certificates were often provided to those who attended just one day of an entire two-week course. Despite the investment in sending attendees to national and international conferences, “some lecturers do not take these conferences seriously and only attend for leisurely pursuits” (HoD 4).

From the above, it is clear that training plays an important role in developing and improving HoDs’ existing professional skills and helps to equip them for their role. The HoDs made some useful suggestions to improve the current provision of training in the University and these are presented in the following section.

6.3.4 Suggestions for Improving HoDs’ Professional Development

The HoDs and the stakeholders made several suggestions for the professional development of HoDs in terms of timing, content, and attendance at training. Several HoDs were convinced that pre-appointment training for the role would be positive for all potential HoDs, so they would know what the role entailed and how to achieve the quality goals of the department. This was perceived as a vital aspect, as HoD 10 observed:

Training [for the HoD role] should have been provided before being offered the post and should be compulsory and the right candidate should be well-prepared before the current HoD leaves.

Given the lack of time for training that HoDs reported and the unattractiveness of the role in some departments, this suggestion is unlikely to work in practice.

In parallel with Bolden et. al. (2008) and Inman (2009), the stakeholders strongly agreed with HoDs on the necessity of providing relevant training to HoDs prior to commencing their role; however, it is arguable if such training should be compulsory. A Vice-Rector advocated this: “HoDs should go to a preparation session at least three weeks before

they sit on the chair”. Dean 1 also felt it was “unfair to come to this position without training or having trained yourself on the future of others”. Stakeholders believed that training prior to assuming the role would help an HoD to “know his role, responsibility and authority, and to understand quality because some of the newcomers don’t know” (Vice Dean).

Regarding training after commencing the role, seven HoDs suggested that the University should provide a lengthy training course offering advanced knowledge and understanding in respect of quality, in addition to receiving training at more appropriate times:

HoDs could be helped by attending advanced courses on quality. Advanced training with total full-time training for a certain period of time without any other administrative obligations would be excellent. I think that is very important and it needs to be set over the summer or some time when there are no academic responsibilities. (HoD 12)

Similar to Bolden et al. (2008a) in the UK, it was also suggested in this study that HoDs should have “continual improvement opportunities” (DDQM 3) with a “regular follow up for professional development” (DDQM 6). Moreover, since the University has limited options for the appointment of HoDs, it is likely that they would not recruit HoDs who were already trained. In many cases, the HoDs come from a small body of personnel already working within the department, and therefore they are not at the management level required for the job. In this context, DDQM 5 suggested that once an academic was nominated for an HoD role, s/he should be given relevant training:

If you are relying mainly on the available resources, then I would quote ‘beggars can’t be choosers’. So, if you don’t have any choice with you and if you have to rely on the available resources, the only possibility is that you make it mandatory that whoever is nominated must be given this training before he joins the department. That might help.

Another important suggestion was that the DDQ should operate awareness raising training in respect of the value of quality and the importance of achieving quality in the department, rather than simply focusing on form-filling and aiming for accreditation:

When we talk to them [academics] about quality, they say this is for accreditation. So, I think they have to understand the importance of quality, not just see it as a way to be accredited. We need some kind of training to make them believe in it, and work towards it. (HoD 5)

In connection with the motivation for the quality initiative, HoDs advocated that the DDQ should offer training for HoDs on a frequent basis, so that they “know what are they doing and why they are doing it” (HoD 14). Similarly, a lack of continuous support for academics has been noted in literature about Saudi HE (Colbran and Al-Ghreimil, 2013). HoD14 also criticised the DDQ on the basis that “they just send out the forms, and they do not educate people on the rationale for filling out these forms”. In parallel to Albaqami (2015), two HoDs suggested not limiting training about QA to HoDs for “the more people the university trains, the better-quality outcomes will be” (HoD 3) and because when a committee is created to write a self-report on the performance of the department or college, “it is very important that committee members know the relevant standards” (HoD 9).

Additionally, HoDs recommended that there should be training on achieving quality in academia in general, and in teaching and academic administration in particular. Two HoDs pinpointed the need for training on specific techniques to achieve quality and emphasised that “theory should be backed up with practical courses” (HoD 11). The content of the courses could also be improved. There seems to be an issue with some of the documents being too theoretical and consequently lacking a practical application. HoD 9 complained of the overly-theoretical nature of such training, which he felt was detached from the actual practice of following quality guidance:

Honestly, [X] University does provide all kinds and different aspects of training programmes. It's just very short, and it still is not practical. You're taking it theoretically. You have to practise these things yourself.

It was also suggested that the University should arrange exposure visits to other high-ranking universities to learn from their accreditation experience and their performance on quality so that: "I can draw a comparison between my department and the benchmark ones" (HoD 13). The stakeholders agreed with Dean 1 saying it was helpful "to exchange experience between those who have good experience in applying quality and with our status".

Professional development was considered by the stakeholders as very important for everybody in the University, especially for those who are in "leadership positions" (DDQM 1). It was reported that when HoDs are professionally trained on quality, they "know the importance of it and can better manage the initiative related to quality" (Dean 3). This is the perception of the stakeholders, which may not reflect HoDs' perception of the training they receive (see Section 6.3.2). The stakeholders also noted that there was limited training on developing "leadership" (Dean 2) or in "administrative skills" (DDQM 6) for HoDs. To address these issues, the stakeholders put forward some suggestions for improvement. For instance, DDQM 5 contended that "familiarity with the national and international accreditation requirements" must be one of the components of HoD training. According to DDQM 1, "there are many skills that they [HoDs] should learn, quality achievement strategy being one of them, definitely". Overall, the participants recommended that training content should be relevant to clarifying HoD role and supporting them to perform this role successfully - a finding which is also reported by Deem et al. (2007). These suggestions are broadly similar to Inman's (2009) study where participants suggested training in human resources management and Preston and Price's (2012) investigation that identified the need for

developing inter-personal skills. Furthermore, the suggestions to improve professional development for HoDs are in line with knowledge framework and typology (see Table 4) in that they highlight the need for leadership training to support HoDs (Knight and Trowler, 2001).

It is clear that there are a number of contradictions in the views of HoDs; ten of the 15 HoDs reported being too busy to attend as many courses as they would like, yet many complained that there was not enough training provision. Secondly, most HoDs did not volunteer for the role themselves, and this raises the question of how many of them would be willing to attend a lengthy training course before being appointed as HoDs. The university is also improving its selection system for recruiting HoDs but these participants seem to ignore this and, as shown by their suggestions, appear to be unrealistic in their expectations.

6.4 Summary

Clearly, both HoDs and other stakeholders hold similar perspectives on the HoD selection process. They were unhappy with the old selection process, which placed all power in the hands of the Dean and made no provision for consultation with academics. Yet, the new selection system, whilst incorporating the participation of academics and using the services of the Selection Committee, nonetheless attracted criticism. Participants from both groups identified similar challenges relating to the implementation of the new system, such as the HoD position being unattractive. However, there was disagreement among HoDs and the stakeholders, with the latter group thinking that there should be more focus on quality during the selection process. Other suggestions include a clear recruitment and development plan, and the use of a competency and merit-based appointment system, in which the leadership and interpersonal skills of the candidates are taken into account. Moreover, HoDs suggested

that selection should consider whether a candidate has a good working relationship with the respective Dean. Furthermore, they suggested the appointment of an HoD elect to prevent disruption to the department. Finally, participants from both groups identified the short tenure of the HoD position as a major obstacle to the continuity of quality-related work, and among the suggestions to improve the selection process, the extension of HoDs' tenure to five years was popular.

It is also obvious that there are many similarities in the views of HoDs and other stakeholders regarding HoDs' professional development, since participants in both groups clearly recognised the importance of professional development for HoDs before commencing their role, believing this to facilitate the effective performance of their expected role, and achievement of quality. However, despite the significance of training, there were limited opportunities for this before taking up the post of HoD. As a result, once in post, HoDs found themselves to be embroiled in their daily routines, which made it difficult for them to attend relevant training.

However, the participants from both groups offered recommendations concerning professional development opportunities for HoDs, which they believed were necessary in order to achieve quality. These suggestions include the provision of compulsory training before being asked to perform the HoD role, and the provision of advanced training on subjects like administration, quality, and accreditation after commencing the role. Additionally, a need was expressed to include training on the rationale and the underlying needs of quality initiatives, and how these can be implemented in reality in an academic context. They also recommended organising exposure visits to other high ranking universities to learn from their experiences. The HoDs suggested broadening the provision of training to include all staff members working in a department. Overall, it seems that, whilst the University does provide a variety of training, there remains a lack

of training relevant to the needs of HoDs who are charged with effective leadership and the delivery of quality.

It has to be acknowledged that HoDs made suggestions that may not work in practice, and sometimes they contradicted themselves. For instance, they suggested compulsory pre-role training of HoDs to enable them to perform their duties effectively. Given that it is very difficult to attract applicants in the first place, this may in fact make the selection process even more problematic. Furthermore, the new selection system seems more focused on selecting suitable applicants, as it includes a voting system and interviews with the top three candidates. In light of these factors, those participants who continue to berate the university for not taking the selection process seriously enough may need to temper their unrealistic expectations.

Chapter 7

Discussion and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis and presents a discussion of the findings, in addition to responding to the research questions, which comprised the following:

1. How, if at all, do HoDs at an elite Saudi university achieve quality within their departments?
2. What factors are said to influence the HoDs in trying to achieve departmental quality?
3. How does the selection and development of HoDs influence their achievement of quality?

Based on these responses, the chapter then provides some recommendations for those responsible for QA at both the departmental and the institutional level in similar contexts. The strengths of the research are then discussed, together with the contribution it makes to existing knowledge. Finally, the limitations of the study are described along with areas that would benefit from further research.

The first section discusses the achievement of quality, as perceived by Saudi participants working at an elite university.

7.2 Achieving Quality

Although quality is an elusive concept, in the HE context it refers to a process of compliance and accountability based on pre-defined standards and/or a process of enhancement and improvement that empowers learners (Harvey and Green, 1993; Kleijnen et al., 2011). This study has found two main factors that affect the understanding of quality and ultimately its achievement. The first is HoDs' length of service in the role and the second is academic discipline.

Length in post is related to quality implementation approaches in that those who were relatively new in post were more likely to adopt a compliance approach and those who had been in post for at least two years were more likely to adopt the quality as culture approach. This could be because those HoDs who have been longer in post are more efficient in their core jobs and therefore have more time to think about and implement quality. Conversely, the HoDs who are relatively new in post may need to devote more time to familiarising themselves with their new responsibilities and thus have less opportunity to pursue quality.

Additionally, HoDs understand the notion of quality differently, depending on their academic department. This indicates that any generic criteria or standards can hardly be equally applicable or relevant to all academic departments in a university. As noted previously, participants from technical subjects see quality in terms of skills and employability; however, HoDs from social sciences and humanities perceive quality in terms of social and civil development. Therefore, it can be assumed that academic discipline makes a difference to quality achievement and how it relates to the measured outcomes. Although the data from this study did indicate some relationship between different academic disciplines and different approaches to quality (i.e. compliance,

consistency and culture), there was not any confirmation of Vukasovic's (2014) finding that scientific subjects highlight quantification, whereas the humanities tend to emphasise the application of qualitative methods.

Clearly, the strategies used to achieve quality in this case study depend on the HoDs' interpretation of quality and the circumstances surrounding its implementation. While most HoDs at Al Jawda University perceive quality as a box-ticking exercise that undermines its value and leads to the adoption of compliance and accreditation approaches, a few perceive it in a more holistic manner that includes developing a quality culture. This latter group view quality as a value that needs to trickle down to the different levels of the organisation. In their view, all staff members need to feel that responsibility for quality is integral to their role.

Furthermore, in this study, some HoDs demonstrated a somewhat superficial and incomplete understating of the concept and its possible application in their department. This sometimes leads to ineffective strategies for quality implementation, such as an over-emphasis on achieving accreditation rather than genuinely applying quality to teaching and learning. The HoDs participating in this study acknowledged that their understanding of the concept affects their choice of QA approach and strategies. For example, an instrumental understating of the concept, as revealed in many departments within this case study, led to staff following the prescribed standards in a rather indiscriminate and uncritical manner; i.e. applying only the compliance approach to quality, which did not induce autonomy in learners or academic staff.

The tendency for departments to adopt a compliance approach is also a consequence of the fact that the training available is most often generic and theoretical with limited opportunities for practical application. This means that the training content is not compatible or suitable for the desired outcomes. Furthermore, the funds allocated to

quality implementation at Al-Jawda University have not yet produced many of the assumed outcomes. Therefore, quality achievement should be seen as a long-term project, so funds for it should be seen as a long term investment.

7.2.1 The Development of the Conceptual Framework

It can be seen in the review of literature relating to the QA field that there are different approaches to quality, i.e. compliance, consistency and culture (see Section 2.3), which may produce various outcomes. This theoretical view was confirmed by the data of this case study (see Section 4.4.1), and led to the development of the Quality Achievement Cycle (see Figure 12 in Section 7.2.2). It is noteworthy that the above-mentioned approaches can be found in diverse sources; however, a majority of texts discuss them individually and vary in emphasising their importance for quality achievement. Cardoso et al. (2015) seems to be one of very few sources in which all three perspectives are reviewed; however, the relations between them are not explicit. Therefore, I applied comprehensive and in-depth analysis to the collected data to discover the relationships between different themes and sub-themes (see sample in Appendix O).

While Cardoso et al.'s (2015) three approaches became apparent/evident in the perspectives of all stakeholders of Al-Jawda University, other elements, such as academic discipline, experience in the role and HoDs' view on quality, appeared equally important for successful quality achievement. Since Cardoso et al.'s (2015) study focused on research and teaching staff, the other elements that emerged in this study were mapped and compared through the lens of HoDs' understanding of QA and the stakeholders' involvement in the QA process. This allowed for the development of a conceptualisation of quality achievement from the perspective of middle-level management.

Furthermore, Cardoso et al.'s (2015) model has been used to analyse the empirical data collected in this case study; however, the emerging relationships and mutual influences of these elements had yet to be established. Therefore, in order to understand the complexity of the QA processes, I attempted to categorise and evaluate the collected material in a descriptive way (see the table in Appendix O). Since it was still convoluted, I decided to summarise my interpretation and conclusions in the form of a succinct diagram. From the findings, it is clear that QA in most departments is understood as only achieving accreditation. Therefore, this model shows the need to move forward to guarantee QA, as would be expected of a knowledge economy that the KSA is aspiring to be. The next section presents and explains the Quality Achievement Cycle in detail.

7.2.2 The Quality Achievement Cycle

The Quality Achievement Cycle diagram (Figure 12) shows the elements involved in the process of quality achievement and their relations and interdependence. It was developed and intended as a conclusion to the resultant data of the Al-Jawda University case study. It explicitly shows the relationships between the three overarching approaches to quality achievement, i.e. compliance, consistency and culture, and situates them in the context of middle management and other stakeholders.

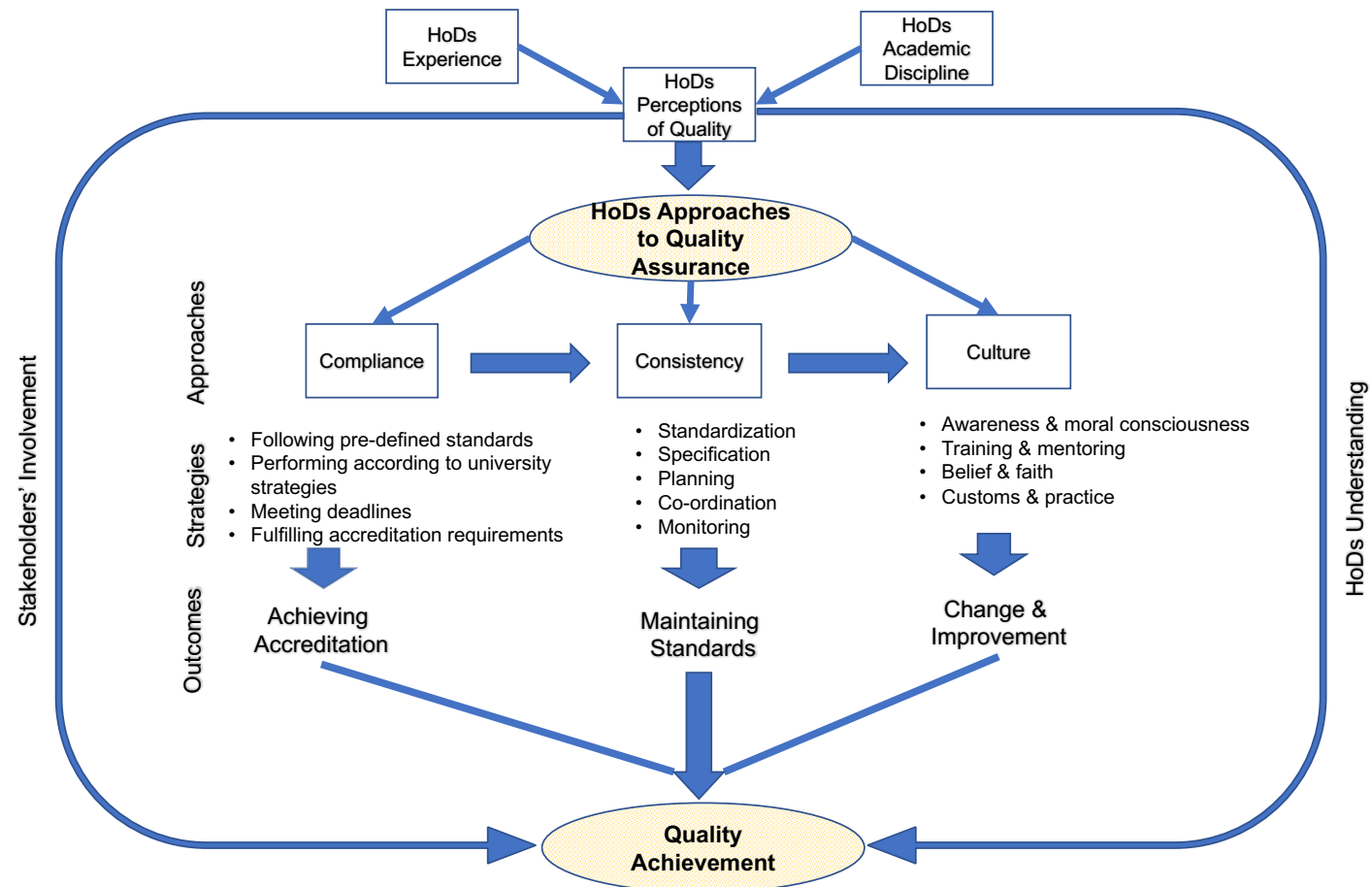


Figure 12: Conceptualisation of Quality Achievement cycle

As can be seen from Figure 12, HoDs' experience and their academic discipline/background shape their perception of quality. Stemming from this, the HoD's own understanding (arrow to the right) and stakeholders' involvement (arrow to the left), both contribute to the achievement of quality. Based on the perception of quality, there are three main approaches to QA, as covered in the literature: compliance, consistency and culture (Cardoso et al., 2015). These three perspectives are not mutually exclusive but seem to be generally linear, suggesting that university departments can be at different points of the three-stage process. The figure suggests there are three approaches to quality but, in reality, the three elements may overlap.

Furthermore, according to each of these overarching approaches, a number of strategies present themselves. Consequently, the implementation of the strategies for each approach yields one of three possible outcomes: achieving accreditation, maintaining standards and/or facilitating change and improvement. The combination of the outcomes seems therefore necessary for quality achievement.

Although quality achievement needs to move from quality as compliance to quality as consistency and then to quality as culture, there is always the potential for backsliding. Depending on external and internal circumstances, a department may progress and regress on the quality implementation continuum, which could result from a change in HoD and/or a lack of funding. For example, an HoD convinced of the need for a culture of quality may be succeeded by an inexperienced HoD, whose focus is on compliance. In effect, a change of personnel could take the department backwards.

The quality achievement cycle further shows that complying with quality standards leads to accreditation, which has an end product based on pre-defined standards. Once accreditation is obtained, consistency of standards is required to maintain achieved

quality. These two approaches aid the development of a quality culture, which is a desired third approach to quality achievement. In the end, the whole process leads to changes and improvement in teaching and learning and transforms the institution. However, it needs to be pointed out that the Saudi context is a very specific one because HE in Saudi is relatively young and does not have a long history. Until as recently as 2005, there were only seven universities. Consequently, it does not have a tradition of quality embedded yet. Since developing a quality culture is a long-term endeavour spanning many years, it is hardly surprising that: a) people at Al Jawda University focus mainly on achieving accreditation without maintaining the standards afterwards, b) quality as culture is rarely observed, and c) genuine quality is not often achieved.

Apart from perception and understanding of the concept of quality, another important element is the participation of all stakeholders in the implementation of QA with the level of HoDs' involvement in quality-oriented activities being of particular significance. Whilst the stakeholders of this study agree that HoDs' engagement in QA is vital, they are not impressed with their actual input. Although HoDs claimed that they were important participants in the QA processes and quality implementation was an integral part of their job, other stakeholders, particularly the DDQMs, emphasised the HoDs' very limited contribution to quality initiatives. HoDs were further described as non-engaged leaders, who were eager to delegate their quality responsibilities to other staff members.

While HoDs want to present a positive image of themselves by emphasising their role in the QA process, the DDQMs are likely to have a more accurate picture because they focus exclusively on quality. Due to their overall responsibilities for quality implementation, the DDQ as a unit has a holistic view of quality achievement over the whole institution, whereas HoDs can have only a fragmented picture related to their own

departments. Moreover, HoDs may be overwhelmed with their multitude of tasks and may feel that QA expectations for their role are too high, while the DDQ may perceive the same level of HoD engagement as substandard. This gap between the DDQ's expectations and the HoDs' levels of involvement needs to be addressed.

Furthermore, there is a general need for quality to be explicitly included in any HoD job description because there is an obvious relationship between the role of HoDs and high quality teaching and learning in a department and the institution (Hellawell and Hancock, 2001; Juhl and Christensen, 2008). At Al-Jawda University, it seems important that an HoD's role in QA is not only emphasised but also specified at a practical level, so that quality implementation moves away from a superficial and "box-ticking" exercise towards a meaningful activity that results in higher standards of teaching, learning and research. Nevertheless, it remains challenging to pinpoint the practicalities of HoD quality-related tasks.

7.3 Factors Influencing Quality Achievement

The task of quality implementation has been undertaken at Al-Jawda University in the hope of improving the standards of teaching and research. Yet, despite much investment and effort, barriers at departmental level seem to be hindering long-term improvements. Furthermore, even though most colleges of Al-Jawda University have obtained accreditation, many HoDs admit that a quality culture has not been embedded.

7.3.1 Lack of Financial and Administrative Power

The lack of quality achievement can be attributed to many factors, most notably the dearth of financial and administrative power experienced by HoDs. This affects many important decisions, including the recruitment of academics and the purchasing of new equipment. Such limited authority and the lengthy bureaucracy to obtain resources

decreases HoDs' involvement and eagerness to implement quality initiatives. This also reduces HoDs to acting as operational managers rather than as strategic decision-makers and leaders. Such bureaucracy seriously restrains HoDs from achieving quality (Albaqami, 2015; Saunders and Sin, 2015). The lack of financial and administrative power in this study is in line with the findings of Nguyen (2013), who looked at HoDs in the Vietnamese context. It is somewhat at odds, though, with the work of Bolden et al. (2008a) who found that, within the UK, the role of HoD was becoming more attractive precisely because budgetary authority was being delegated in a way that had not happened previously. This negative aspect is further compounded by the short tenure of office (2 years), which seriously limits the possible range of decisions. It also adversely affects staff performance and the quality of teaching, learning and research in a department.

7.3.2 Lack of Institutional Support

The lack of authority reported by most HoDs at Al Jawda University is exacerbated by the high level of bureaucracy and heavy administrative duties. While it is understandable that paperwork for any procedure, including QA and accreditation, needs to be completed, HoDs emphasised that the amount of documentation that is processed in departments is unreasonable, implying that time is spent on administrative tasks rather than on monitoring quality outcomes.

The heavy workload is compounded by a lack of qualified administrative assistants. This results in fragmented time devoted to research, preparation and teaching, which inevitably lowers the quality of teaching. Furthermore, this heavy involvement in administrative tasks reduces HoDs' engagement and leaves them with no room for professional development. Such administrative tasks and procedures create a barrier to other quality initiatives, as they limit the time HoDs have to fulfil their other

commitments at the workplace. Similar observations about the counterproductive focus on administration were made by Deem (2000), Johnson et al. (2002) and Smith (2005) over a decade ago and by Wang (2014) more recently.

7.3.3 Staffing Issues

HoDs at Al-Jawda University have limited power not only in relation to finance and administration but also in relation to staff recruitment and discipline. As reported by the participants and explained in the literature (see Hellawell and Hancock, 2001; Juhl and Christensen, 2008), HoDs are powerless with regard to tackling staffing issues. They are not able to dismiss under-performing academics, neither those of Saudi origin, who occupy permanent posts, nor those of non-Saudi origin, who inflate grades in order to receive the high student evaluation scores needed for their contract renewal. This inevitably disturbs the academic function of a department and prevents HoDs from enhancing the quality of teaching, learning and research. Such limited power in the field of staffing is due to the government interventionism regarding the recruitment processes of Saudi academics (Alkhazim, 2003). This actually means that the university may have very limited control over the employment of suitably qualified academics.

In addition, the management of academics is identified by HoDs as another significant challenge due to respect for one's elders and respect for teachers, which result in difficulties in discussing poor performance of their colleagues. In Saudi Arabia, there is a deeply embedded tradition of respecting one's elders. Hence, this moral imperative seems to hinder HoDs from adequately managing their staff and disciplining under-performing senior academics. This obligation to respect one's elders can also be observed in the way senior Saudi staff are not challenged when they refuse to implement quality initiatives such as new teaching methods or the latest technological developments. HoDs find it difficult to convince senior Saudi staff to fulfil the quality requirements and

apply changes according to the university strategies. Since they are employed on permanent and lifelong contracts (Rugh, 2002; Mazawi, 2005), their job and salary are secure, regardless of their performance. This means HoDs cannot dismiss under-performing academics.

Similarly, Saudi culture places high importance on respecting one's teachers, which is important in the context of Al-Jawda University, an institution that seems to have a preference for employing its own graduates. There are instances when Heads of Department and their former teachers are working in the same academic department, which can result in a lack of respect for the HoDs and a certain reluctance to comply with their decisions. In other words, the cultural necessity to respect teachers can hamper HoDs from garnering an effective performance from senior academics, who have previously taught them when the former were students at the university.

7.3.4 Resistance to Change

The HoDs hinted that some academics are convinced that QA is yet another surveillance system, which is meant to downplay academic integrity. Others see it as a temporary fad, which increases their workload. A third group has insufficient knowledge of implementing quality initiatives and/or lack of awareness of its advantages, which is in line with literature (see Land and Rattray, 2014 or Albaqami, 2015). Finally, of course, there is a generic fear of the unknown. This could be directly related to high uncertainty avoidance and a cautious approach to any changes observable in the KSA, as indicated by Hofstede, which can be seriously limiting for the acceptance of new initiatives, including QA, and a pragmatic approach to problem solving.

Participants agreed that the resistance described above meant out-dated teaching approaches were being perpetuated in Saudi HEIs and that this was negatively affecting

the quality of graduates and the skills needed for their future careers. This finding is in line with previous studies of KSA (see Al-Ghamdi and Tight, 2013; Colbran and Al-Ghreimil, 2013).

The resistance could also be triggered by three distinctive characteristics of Saudi HE. The first feature is that a significant number of younger Saudi academics are sent to study overseas in developed countries and come back to the KSA with new ideas and enthusiasm to implement changes and use new technologies. This can create tension between Saudi senior academics and the younger generation, especially if the latter hold managerial positions such as that of an HoD. While the younger academics are keen to employ modern methods in their teaching, the more senior academics tend to reject such initiatives. This could also result from high uncertainty avoidance and a cautious approach to change, typical of the KSA.

Secondly, the strict hierarchy and high power distance still observed in Saudi result in an autocratic management style while younger HoDs due to their educational background may well be familiar with more egalitarian approaches present in developed countries. Such a situation inevitably leads to resistance from senior staff and slows down the implementation of change. Such resistance among seniors may also indicate that not enough attention has been given to strategies such as communication and exchanges as well as openness to new ideas and criticism, which should be seen as a constructive and developmental process, rather than in terms of sheer accountability. Nonetheless, the modifications are still likely to happen in the future when the generational change is completed (Onsman, 2010).

The third feature pertinent to the issue of resistance is the pace of change in Saudi HE, which seems to be greater than in some other parts of the world (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013). Although rapid change often has positive connotations, a quality

culture needs time to be instilled and to permeate. Only then can resistance to quality be truly eradicated and a quality culture embedded in an HEI. This high pace of change may be related to Hofstede's long-term orientation, which reflects valuing tradition while planning for the future and handling the inevitable development.

7.3.5 NCAAA

Another issue hindering quality was the NCAAA, which the majority of participants do not find helpful for at least two reasons. First, all the paperwork in English is very time-consuming for a less proficient English speaker. Many of the participants do not understand why the paperwork should be in a foreign language when the accreditation body is in Saudi Arabia and inspecting Saudi organisations; they simply find it an anomaly. Further, participants felt that if they had to spend so much time completing paperwork in English, then they could just as easily do so for an international accrediting body, which would have higher status and international credibility. In addition to that, the quality culture will not be embedded if the documentation is in English.

Secondly, it was felt that the NCAAA had not adapted its quality standards to the local context. This made the participants question the whole purpose of having a Saudi accreditation agency, when it was not able to meet the needs of its own Saudi establishments. NCAAA lacks the prestige of an international accreditation organisation and, therefore, it is understandable that departments would choose the international route instead. HoDs thought it was easier to apply for international accreditation, which is applicable to their specific academic disciplines, as it has less paperwork and is also considered more prestigious.

There are two main approaches NCAAA can adopt to persuade Saudi HEIs to endorse its services. Firstly, it could make its standards more appropriate and suited to the Saudi

culture. At the moment, it seems to be trying to promote international standards, which may be because it is attempting to raise Saudi quality standards to international levels. However, it has resulted in NCAAA being seen as simply copying Western standards. Such actions may not always be seen as the most desired options in the context of serious cultural differences (see Section 1.5.3). Secondly, NCAAA could accept and publish all its paperwork in Arabic. This would make more sense in an Arabic-speaking country and would give NCAAA ownership of the standards. It may also encourage more HoDs to apply for accreditation, as they would spend less time completing forms in their native language.

Despite a list of hindrances, the participants are optimistic about overcoming hurdles in quality achievement. As emphasised in Chapter 5, the participants believe that instilling quality culture is only a matter of time for, upon their retirement, the reluctant senior colleagues will be replaced by the younger generation educated abroad, which is accustomed to fulfilling quality requirements.

7.4 Selection and Development of HoDs

7.4.1 Selection

The participants in this research think the way that HoDs are selected plays an important role in achieving quality. The significance of the selection process is due to the leadership role of an HoD in an academic department. Participants believe that effective leadership at a department level not only helps with achieving goals but also in the general functioning of the department. Thus, the way in which an HoD is selected has a significant impact on the way a department will function in the future and the level of quality it will achieve.

Consequently, careful consideration should be given to developing the role description and selection criteria for HoDs. There was recognition of the importance of HoDs believing in quality and evaluation of their quality implementation performance in the department. Recruitment of a suitable leader may be a challenge, but this challenge can be partly addressed if the position is offered in open competition and with an attractive remuneration package. In this way, the position could attract qualified individuals external to the university, as well as from outside the country. This would, however, require a policy change in KSA, as currently foreigners are not encouraged to take on a leadership role; it is therefore an aspiration. Not only would a more open selection process help reduce bias, but it would also enhance transparency and credibility, which are important pre-requisites for a leadership role.

In this study, almost all participants shared their negative views about the old HoD selection. This process is characterised by a concentration of power in the hands of the college Dean, limited involvement of academics and general lack of transparency, which is viewed unfavourably. Apart from its inability to assess and evaluate the skills and experience of the applicant, there is also a mention of the issue of nepotism, where people can be selected on the basis of who they know, rather than on merit. The participants expressed their satisfaction with the new selection system, which has led to the establishment of a Selection Committee and interviewing of candidates. The new system allows academics to have a voice in the process and focuses on evaluating the required skills. These include having a vision, being a team-builder and demonstrating effective communication skills, as well as academic achievement in the field. Therefore, the participants emphasise that the new selection system reduces bias and favouritism and is more participatory; however, other stakeholders claim that there should still be

more focus on quality during the selection process. Nevertheless, this system was also criticised for its lack of improvement in the attractiveness of the HoD role, which may result in some departments switching back to the old system due to an identifiable lack of candidates for the position of head of department.

The majority of the participants are also critical of the two-year tenure of an HoD. Such a short-term leadership position does not result in long-term planning and implementation in a department, as it can take some time for an individual to settle into a new job and start to make changes. In addition, the two-year tenure incorporates eight months of holidays, so this has resulted in a very short time for effective planning. Although short-tenure leaders often do not have the opportunity to accomplish what they would like to do, there were some reservations about extending the length of the tenure. Some participants expressed doubts about having an unsuitable HoD imposed on them for a longer period of time. This may be because such an extension in tenure would impose an ineffective HoD upon the department members for longer, thereby creating its own challenges. However, the suggestion by HoDs that the two years could be extended based on a performance review showed that many of the HoDs were unaware of existing policies. Such a system is already in place; this indicates that there may be a communication issue within the university, but it also indicates that HoDs may not be planning ahead. If they are not considering a longer-term tenure, then they will perhaps not make the extra effort to consider strategic planning for the department.

7.4.2 Professional Development of HoDs

The importance of organisations investing in the personal development of their members has been well documented (Friedman and Phillips, 2004). Although Al Jawda University offers many training opportunities, a majority of the participants are dissatisfied with the current provision for professional development. They criticise the theoretical nature of

available training, the suitability of development opportunities, and the cumbersome processes involved in obtaining approval to attend available NCAAA courses. Nonetheless, the participants contradict themselves by emphasising their over-booked schedules to attend any training recommended by the University.

The desired outcomes of such training are not only achieved through relevant content, but also through effective delivery. Much depends on the time available for undertaking training opportunities as well as preferred learning approaches. It is also important that individuals occupying leadership position are given opportunities to expand their horizons through international training and learning opportunities as these can help HoDs to learn from the experiences of other educational cultures and systems. Since such international programmes can be expensive and reservations exist about their effectiveness for Saudi participants, they need to have tangible outcomes in order to be seen as value for money.

In addition, it has been noted that participants highlighted workload and bureaucracy as barriers to their access to professional development opportunities. This suggests that attention needs to be given to the timing of such training, so that it does not coincide with times when HoDs are especially busy, such as at exam times. The timing for training is not just limited to adjusting according to the HoD's workload but also needs to focus on the role itself. It has been clearly stated by the participants that pre-role training is as important as on-the-job training. Pre-role training helps to develop the skills needed for a new role, and it has been shown that it can be very effective, especially when linked to learning outcomes (Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran, 2010). It can reduce anxiety among individuals and encourage them to discharge the new role as expected, whereas training while in post offers more potential for reflection and learning from experience. Reflection allows individuals to consider their own work experiences and learn from their

mistakes (Helyer, 2015); therefore it can facilitate understanding. It must be acknowledged, however, that the university could devote much time and effort to developing pre-appointment courses but find very few candidates willing to take them. The participants in this study complained about lack of time, and it was clear they were not already availing the opportunities available. This makes it debateable as to whether they would find time to attend extra courses, despite the best efforts of the university to provide them.

Nevertheless, some participants still suggested that pre-role training should be made compulsory for an HoD. This has both advantages and disadvantages. If compulsory, it can improve attendance and ensure an individual has been trained to a certain level. However, in literature, compulsory training has been found to be no more effective than voluntary training in achieving long-term outcomes. Whereas mandatory pre-role training may demonstrate the organisation's commitment to such initiatives, voluntary training may attract those who do not have a training need (Shemla et al., 2013). On an individual basis, compulsory training may mean that trainees are attending simply because they have no option and they are not interested in the topic or that they find it irrelevant to their needs. From the participants' responses, it was clear that there was this element of irrelevance in their programmes, as they did not always find the training related to their own requirements.

In addition, it needs to be emphasised that making pre-role training compulsory could be even more unhelpful for those departments that struggle to recruit candidates for the position. With participants already stating they have little time for training that is not relevant, it is questionable as to whether they would consider such pre-role training as being related to their immediate needs. Furthermore, the obligation of undertaking

training before commencing the role may deter academics potentially interested in the role of HoD and make the position even less attractive.

7.5 Recommendations

The study has investigated quality achievement in Saudi HE and revealed a number of concerns that can impede this process. The participants claim the high investment in quality implementation has fulfilled only some of the desired quality objectives. Based on the findings, several recommendations for improvement are proposed. These concern a) understanding the concept and developing quality culture, b) devolving authority and enhancing financial autonomy, c) enhancing the HoD position, d) professional development and mentoring and e) quality of teaching.

7.5.1 Understanding and Developing Quality Culture

Although, accreditation has helped Al-Jawda University to start working towards quality achievement, there was also a clear view that some staff at various levels have only a superficial understanding of the concept of quality while quality-related work is "just on paper". This finding will be of great concern to the MoHE, NCAAA, Al-Jawda University senior management and other stakeholders. A significant amount of money is needed to obtain accreditation, and yet there appears to be no effective system for enabling staff to understand and work towards quality achievement, even after obtaining accreditation. To be effective, such a system would need to bring attitudinal and behavioural changes amongst staff members so that they appreciate the concept of quality in their daily work and therefore quality evolves into quality culture. Thus, there is an urgent need to enhance the awareness and knowledge of staff members, so they become familiar with the benefits of quality implementation in their work. Moreover, the development of team spirit based on recognising and rewarding individual and collective

achievement will inevitably encourage staff to participate in quality implementation and achievement.

7.5.2 Devolving Authority

Further, this study also found a severe lack of financial and administrative autonomy on the part of HoDs in Al-Jawda University. This is very restrictive for HoDs in terms of achieving quality. Based on this finding, it is recommended that Al-Jawda University provides HoDs with more financial and administrative powers because decentralisation of university governance is thought by HoDs to support the development of quality culture. 'Flexible budgeting', as recommended by one participant, could be one way of addressing financial constraints. This would allow HoDs to access and allocate funds according to departmental needs, instead of undergoing lengthy and cumbersome bureaucratic procedures.

Furthermore, it is also recommended that HoDs are given more administrative power, especially the power to recruit and dismiss staff since HoDs are immediately involved with the staff working in their departments. Although this is a major change in the way hiring is currently undertaken, it would mean more control for the HoDs, who are in a better position to identify the need for new recruits and also assess the performance of academics. If HoDs are sufficiently empowered to make decision at the departmental level, the time delay observed in many procedures, including recruitment, would be minimised. Therefore, enhanced financial and administrative powers for HoDs would lessen the ill effects associated with the centralisation of the current governing system in Al-Jawda University.

Since centralised power limits HoDs in terms of managing the department and empowering their academics to achieve quality, devolution of power would be needed to

improve the situation in Al-Jawda University. This could be achieved through a detailed specification of HoD rights and responsibilities. Currently, in many areas, the HoD's job description limits their authority to making recommendations (see Section 4.2.1.1 for further details). This should be rewritten so that they have space for actual decision-making and strategic operation.

7.5.3 Enhancing the HoD Position

The findings also suggest that the position of HoD needs to be attractive and competitive. This could be achieved by increasing the autonomy of the HoD and by offering a competitive salary and/or a variety of other incentives, a budget and a reduced workload achieved by employing qualified administrative staff. In addition, opening up the position externally or even internationally could raise the attractiveness and competitiveness of the role and enable the selection of the best-qualified candidates.

However, there is currently a lack of clarity regarding related tasks and procedures within the HoD position. This leads to the reported discrepancy between the level of HoD involvement in quality implementation as understood by the DDQ and by the HoDs themselves. This could be addressed by providing clearer guidance from the DDQ and other units responsible for quality, instead of relying only on the available manual that provides written theoretical knowledge. In this way, the HoDs would have a better understanding of their role within the quality initiative and it could provide them with a sense of empowerment.

7.5.4 Mentoring and Training

Another recommendation relates to how HoD training can be made more effective. Many participants were able to articulate the benefits of QA but then admitted their limited knowledge in how it could be achieved in practice. Consequently, a system of

mentoring and coaching should be expanded across the university. This would further support not only knowledge transfer (achieved through training) but also the development of the required skills and practical knowledge. Moreover, the support available from DDQ should not happen by departmental invitation only, as those who need it most may be the least likely to request it. In addition, there appears to be a lack of coordination among various stakeholders and the expectations they have of colleagues, suggesting that better communication channels are needed. This would enable more transparency across departments and contribute to establishing a quality culture across the university.

Furthermore, this research has identified a number of flaws in the recruitment and training of HoDs to effectively run their department and fulfil their role. Al-Jawda University needs to devise a recruitment and training system for HoDs, which recognises and develops effective leadership skills. To date, there has been limited uptake of training so different approaches need to be taken, and certainly this could include mentoring and shadowing. It is particularly important because the role of an HoD is a "buffer" zone between the expectations of higher management and academic staff; thus, they translate the university regulations, interpret strategies to be applied and communicate staff issues and needs to the university management. Therefore, critical reflection, peer feedback and sharing experiences need to be emphasised as good practice.

Given the need to ensure that Saudi nationals are employed in their own country, it is important for full training to be extended to them, especially when they are working with expatriates employed on temporary contracts. A shadowing role would benefit Saudi staff and protect the department against loss of knowledge, when an expatriate's contract expires and they vacate the position.

In addition, professional development activities must be relevant and needs-based; hence, role-specific training should be made available to HoDs. This is also why a training needs analysis (TNA) should be conducted before any training is arranged. This will then identify any specific needs an individual may have and focus on gaps in their skills or knowledge with regard to leadership, e.g. HoDs' skillset, including interpersonal skills, team-building and supervision, finance and budgeting, policy and strategies for quality achievement and information on student experience. It is important that HoDs update their practice regularly and understand that this is a professional requirement, which is part of their job.

7.5.5 Quality of Teaching

Another point of concern highlighted by the research showed that there was little recognition of teaching abilities within the current system since career progression depends on an evaluation system that assesses research output. Consequently, publications gain priority over student experience. This does not encourage academic staff to improve their teaching approaches or to update their teaching knowledge through professional development.

If teaching quality were more formally recognised, it would motivate academics to seek constant improvement to their teaching practice and acquire a better understanding of quality processes. Staff would be able to perceive the relevance of quality in teaching if they were able to associate it with career prospects and potential promotion. This way, it is likely that they would be more accepting of quality implementation.

Although Al-Jawda University engages students in quality achievement through evaluation of their tutors, there is scope for further manipulation in order to maximise non-Saudi academics' rewards and contract extensions. Therefore, student evaluation of academics should not be a sole factor in staff appraisal and evaluation of the quality of

teaching. Hence, it can be suggested that elements such as peer observation should also be taken into consideration when reviewing the current inefficient evaluation system. However, if an integrative system were in place, then this could be useful, although the take-up of such a system would depend on the goodwill of the participants, as peer evaluations tend to be voluntary.

7.6 Strengths of the Study/Contribution to the Field

This research makes a contribution to both theory and practice in the field of quality and leadership in HE. In terms of theory, it addresses the knowledge gap with regard to the role of HoDs in quality achievement. In practice, it provides some recommendations to practitioners and policy makers for achieving the desired quality in Saudi HE (see Section 7.5). It is expected that the research findings will be beneficial to the Saudi MoHE and support them in their quest to be the leader of the Middle East with respect to QA. The findings may also be beneficial to researchers and policy-makers outside the KSA, if their HE systems have a similarly high degree of centralisation.

In addition, this study has provided a conceptual model for quality achievement (see Figure 12). The Quality Achievement Cycle will be of benefit to other HE establishments in developing countries. The model illustrates how the three approaches of compliance, consistency and culture give rise to different QA strategies, and achieve different outcomes (accreditation, maintaining standards and change and improvement). This provides a framework for HEIs to understand the approaches and strategies for successful quality outcomes.

Methodologically, the study is unusually strong because both male and female participants were interviewed face to face in the context of a gender segregated society. I am not aware of any other study that has achieved this. The empirical data collected in

this research seems to be unique, not least because of the inclusion of the views and perceptions of a range of academic disciplines and stakeholders occupying different hierarchical positions, in addition to HoDs themselves.

7.7 Limitations of the Study and Areas for Future Work

This study has three main limitations relating to the research approach, sampling and future development.

- Study approach: This study used a case study approach, which can have many advantages but also evidence certain limitations. The main limitation is the restricted ability to generalise findings to other contexts and cases. Although almost all Saudi HEIs have a similar management structure and are MoHE-dependent, this case study was conducted within a specific university and therefore the results may not be applicable to other Saudi HEIs. These findings are based on one established public university; therefore, it would be worth investigating quality implementation in a newer, less elite university. Future, research may also consider studying two comparative cases and/or a larger sample through the addition of a quantitative element.
- Sample: This project elicited the views of HoDs and other key players in relation to quality achievement. It would be worth investigating the views of students since they are important stakeholders. Therefore, it would be valuable to have their opinions on the quality of teaching and learning. It would also contribute to the picture if views of NCAAA members and non-academic staff were investigated. At a later stage, it might also be worth eliciting opinions from parents and prospective employers.

- Although the Quality Achievement Cycle provides a framework for HEIs to understand the approaches and strategies for successful quality outcomes, more research is needed to validate the model, given that this was based on a case study of a single university.

Overall, this study offers a comprehensive view of QA in a Saudi HEI and in so doing provides information that can support the enhancement of quality in Saudi universities. It also offers a theoretical framework (Figure 12) that can be used in HEIs in other developing or emerging economies with highly-centralised systems. The recommendations are intended to overcome the deficiencies identified by the HoDs themselves and other stakeholders. Some of the recommendations are relatively straightforward to implement; others, in all fairness, will require quite a radical departure from current practice at both the institutional and ministerial levels.

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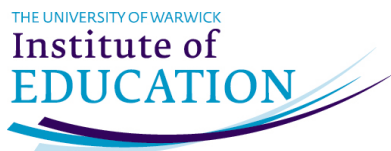
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Appendices



Appendix A: Ethical Approval Form

Application for Ethical Approval for Research Degrees

(MA by research, MPhil/PhD, EdD)

Name of student: Hissah Al-Tuwayjiri

PhD

Project title: The Role of Heads of Department in Achieving Quality: A case study of a high-ranking university in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Supervisor: Dr. Justine Mercer

Funding Body: The Ministry of Education- Saudi Arabia.

Methodology

A qualitative case study methodology will be employed to answer the research questions. Case studies are useful where there is a need for in-depth understanding of the issues, and where there are multiple factors involved. The researcher intends to conduct the proposed study in two universities in Saudi Arabia, one private and one public. Semi-structured interviews and documents will be the main sources of data for this research.

Participants

The participants for the study will include middle leaders such as Heads of Departments (HoDs)/ Deans, and other people involved in QA in the respective universities.

Participation in the study will be voluntary, and it is estimated that 25-30 people will be interviewed from various departments/faculties. The number of interviewees will be decided when the researcher get to saturation point.

Respect for participants' rights and dignity

Participation in the study is voluntary. Participants' names will be anonymised when reporting the findings so they will not be identifiable. As the researcher shares the same cultural and religious background as the participants, she is sensitised to issues of fairness and respectfulness in accordance with religious teachings and cultural boundaries. Moreover, the following steps will be taken by the researcher to ensure that participants will not be disadvantaged in any way by being interviewed:

In all cases, I will contact the university and present a participant information sheet explaining the aims of study and its methodology;

The purposes of the research and interviews will be made clear to potential participants;

Participants will be told that they have the right to ask questions regarding the research and the interview process;

Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the interview at anytime;

Participants will be also informed in advance that the researcher would like to have their interviews recorded and they will have the right to refuse to be recorded;

No real names will be used in reporting the results of this study.

Privacy and confidentiality

The issue of power and policy makers is anticipated to arise from the collected data; the participants will be assured that their identity will be anonymised. All the data generated will be secured in a personal computer protected by a password.

Consent - will prior informed consent be obtained? **Yes**

- From participants? **Yes** from others? **N/A**

Explain how this will be obtained. If prior informed consent is not to be obtained, give reason:

The researcher will share a printed Participant Information Sheet (**Annex-A**), with the potential participant. If the participant agrees to participate in the study, he/she will be asked to sign a consent form (**Annex-B**). There may be some participants who may not be able to understand the information sheet and consent form in English; they will be given an Arabic version of these documents. An attempt will be made to keep the original meaning intact in the translated documents.

However, the following steps will be taken to gain informed consent:

- Participants will be supplied with a letter of request and an explanation of the research aims;
- Potential participants will be told that ethical approval has been given by Warwick University.
- It will be made clear in the 'Information to Participants' and on the 'Consent Form' that participating in this research is NOT part of the performance appraisal for participants.
- Participants will have enough time to read the form before signing it.
- I will gather all the completed forms before the interviews.

Competence

Having attended the Advance Research Method (ARM) sessions provided by the University, I have developed my understanding of key methodological considerations; receiving support and guidance from my supervisor has also helped to further develop my competence in this particular context.

Protection of participants

Participants' safety will not be at risk from taking any part in this study. There is no potential risk for Participants taking part in the study.

Child protection

Will a CRB check be needed? **No** (If yes, please attach a copy.)

Addressing dilemmas

Because of cultural restraints, the researcher may not be able to interview male participants in a face-to-face setting. Therefore, they will not have the advantage of qualitative face-to-face interviews, where the participant's body language can be observed as well. However, in these cases, there will be the opportunity to conduct Skype and/or telephone interviews. This limitation will be acknowledged in the research.

Misuse of research

The findings from the thesis will help inform future implementation of QA systems in the KSA HE sector. The researcher will not misuse the research findings, and participants will be completely anonymised and all the data will be kept confidentially.

Support for research participants

Participants' will be assured that the results will not affect their position. Any sensitive issues or concerns will be dealt with anonymity and confidentiality. If any participant wishes to withdraw from the study, he/she will be assured that he/she has the right to do so, and their participation data will be kept anonymised.

Integrity

The research will not identify the names or nationalities of any of the participants. The data will be reported in as trustworthy a manner as much as possible; interpretations of the data will be sensitive to contextual constraints on individuals.

What agreement has been made for the attribution of authorship by yourself and your supervisor(s) of any reports or publications?

This will follow established practice but there are no immediate plans for authored papers.

Signed

Hissah Al-Tuwayjiri

Research student

27th June 2013

Date

Justine Mercer

27th June 2013

Supervisor

Date

Action

Please submit to the Research Office (Louisa Hopkins, room WE132)

Action taken☒

Approved

☐

Approved with modification or conditions – see below

☐

Action deferred. Please supply additional information or clarification – see below

Name

G. WINDSOM

Date

25/7/13

Signature

*Gaff***Stamped****Notes of Action**

- ① I have approved but please bear in mind that others may try to misuse your research findings. This may be an issue if the funder prefers other findings – be sensible to this + discuss with your supervisor if it seems likely to be a problem

Appendix B: Participants Information and Consent Form

Centre for Education Studies
The University of Warwick
Coventry, CV4 8EE
United Kingdom



Project Information and Consent to be a Research Participant

Dear Participant,

The purpose of this letter is to introduce my research project and ask for your assistance in data collection. I am a PhD student in the Centre for Education Studies at the University of Warwick, UK.

Introduction of the Project: the purpose of this research is to explore the role of Heads of Departments (HoDs) in achieving quality in Al-Jawda University in Saudi Arabia. It is hoped that the findings of this research will help Al-Jawda University as well as other Saudi Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to achieve quality.

Procedure: Data are being collected from HoDs and other parties involved in quality achievement at the university. In addition to administering an on-line questionnaire, I am conducting 20-25 interviews with people from different faculties. If you agree, I intend to audio-record the interview. However, if you prefer not to be recorded, I can rely on my handwritten notes, instead. All data will be coded in order to preserve confidentiality. Pseudonyms will be used in all reporting. The interview can be conducted in English or Arabic, or a mixture of the two, as you prefer. I am happy to conduct the interview face-to-face or via Skype or telephone as per your preference.

Benefits: As an HoD, you will have an opportunity to reflect upon the current quality achievement in Saudi and to offer your view, comments, thoughts and insights on quality achievement in Saudi HEIs. The findings are hoped to significantly contribute to the further enhancement of the implementation of quality at Saudi universities.

Confidentiality: Any information you give as part of this research will be stored in a secure place and held in accordance with the University of Warwick requirements. As such, it will remain strictly confidential and will be used only for the purposes of this thesis and subsequent academic publications. As far as possible, the researcher will take all reasonable steps to safeguard the anonymity of all participants throughout the research process. This research project has also gone through the university's ethical approval procedure.

You will be able to withdraw from this research at any time. Should you wish to do so, please contact the researcher by phone or email as per the details below.

Should you have any further questions regarding this project, you can contact the researcher via the details given below.

Yours Sincerely,

Hissah Al-Tuwayjiri

Doctoral Research Student

Centre for Education Studies

University of Warwick, Coventry, UK.

Mobile: 00966555135222

E-mail: H.A.Altuwayjiri@warwick.ac.uk OR hessah-t@hotmail.com

Supervisor: Dr. Justine Mercer

Centre for Education Studies

University of Warwick

Coventry, CV4 8EE

E-mail: justine.mercer@warwick.ac.uk

Please sign if you are willing to participate in this research project.

Signature _____

Printed Name _____

Date _____

Appendix C: The Online Questionnaire

Quality Achievement in Saudi Higher Education

Page One

ID 143



The University of Warwick
Centre for Education Studies
United Kingdom

ID 5

Project Title: The Role of Heads of Academic Department in Achieving Quality: A Case Study of a High-Ranking University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Researcher: Hissah Al-Tuwayjiri, PhD student

Supervisor: Dr. Justine Mercer

About this study

This study is a doctoral research project that focuses on the role of Heads of Department (HoD) in achieving quality in Higher Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The enquiry will be conducted as a case study, taking place at a public university of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is hoped that the findings of this research will contribute to the understanding of issues regarding achieving quality in Saudi Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The objectives of this questionnaire are

- (1) to collect initial data that can be further explored in the interviews.
- (2) to select an appropriate sample of the participants for semi-structured interviews.

This questionnaire does not seek to judge individual views, but aims to understand a variety of opinions and approaches regarding the achievement quality and its implementation in the chosen institution in Saudi Arabia. The survey should not be treated as a test so there are no "right" or "wrong" answers and you may keep your responses anonymous if you wish. Please give your answers sincerely as only this will guarantee the success of the investigation.

Confidentiality

Participation in this questionnaire is voluntary and anonymous. The completion and return of the survey will constitute your consent to participate in this research study. All information provided will be used for research purposes only. All the responses will be treated in strictest confidence and reported in a way that keeps individuals and their departments completely anonymous. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is highly appreciated.

Please feel free to answer in English or Arabic. If you need any clarification, please contact me at: h.a.altuwayjiri@warwick.ac.uk or hessah-t@hotmail.com and/or by phone +966555135222 (KSA), +447771361102 (UK). Alternatively, you may contact my supervisor at: justine.mercer@warwick.ac.uk.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Hissah Abdullah Al-Tuwayjiri

جامعة وريك
مركز الدراسات التربوية
المملكة المتحدة

عنوان المشروع: دور رؤساء الأقسام الأكاديمية في تحقيق الجودة: دراسة حالة لجامعة ذات تصنيف عالي في المملكة العربية السعودية

الباحثة: طالبة الدكتوراة، حصة التويجري
المشرفة: الدكتوراة "جاستين ميرسر"

لمحة عن الدراسة

هذه الدراسة هي مشروع بحث في الدكتوراة وفيها تركز الباحثة على دور رؤساء الأقسام الأكاديمية في تحقيق الجودة في مجال التعليم العالي في المملكة العربية السعودية. وسيكون هذا على شكل دراسة حالة تتناول جامعة حكومية. ومن المؤمل أن تسهم نتائج هذا البحث في فهم القضايا المتعلقة بضمان جودة عالية في مؤسسات التعليم العالي في المملكة. ولغرض هذه الدراسة، ستستخدم الاستبانة في جمع جزء من البيانات.

ومن أهداف هذه الاستبانة: (١) جمع المعلومات العامة الأولية التي يمكن التعمق فيها عن طريق إجراء المزيد من المقابلات (٢) اختيار مجموعة من المشاركين لإجراء مقابلات شبه منظمة.

علما بأن هذه الاستبانة لا تسعى لإصدار أحكام على الآراء الشخصية، بل تسعى إلى فهم مجموعة متنوعة من الآراء والمناهج في كيفية تحقيق الجودة وتنفيذها في المؤسسة التي ستتم فيها الدراسة في المملكة العربية السعودية.

تأمل الباحثة ألا يتم التعامل مع الاستبانة على أنها اختبار، حيث إنه ليست هناك إجابات صحيحة أو إجابات خاطئة، ولذا يرجى أن تكون إجاباتكم صريحة لأن هذا سيؤدي حتما إلى نجاح البحث.

الخصوصية

هذه الاستبانة سرية والمشاركة فيها تطوعية، ويعتبر إكمال وإعادة الاستبانة بمثابة موافقتك على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة البحثية. كل المعلومات المقدمة سوف تستخدم لأغراض بحثية فقط. كما سيجري التعامل مع جميع الردود بسرية تامة وسيتم الإشارة إليها بأسلوب يضمن عدم التعرف على هويات الأفراد أو إداراتهم التي ينتمون إليها.

علما بأن هذه الاستبانة سوف تستغرق عشر دقائق تقريبا. وسوف تحظى مشاركتكم بتقدير واحترام كبيرين.

يمكن الإجابة باللغتين العربية أو الانجليزية. وفي حالة الحاجة إلى أي توضيح، فيرجى حينئذ الاتصال بالباحثة على أي من هذين العنوانين على بريدها الإلكتروني: h.a.altuwayjiri@warwick.ac.uk أو hessah@hotmail.com أو عن طريق الهاتف +966555135222 (السعودية) أو +447771361102 (المملكة المتحدة) أو الاتصال بمشرفتها على عنوان بريدها الإلكتروني: justine.mercer@warwick.ac.uk

نشكركم على حسن تعاونكم

باحثة الدكتوراة / حصة عبد الله التويجري

ID 6

I have read the cover letter and I agree to participate in this questionnaire.

***** (لقد قرأت التمهيد أعلاه وأوافق على المشاركة في الاستبانة)

☐ Yes (نعم)

☐ No (لا)

(untitled)

Page description:

ID 7

Part 1: Demographic and departmental Information

(الجزء الأول: المعلومات الديمغرافية والادارية)

ID 11

a) Name of College (اسم الكلية) *

ID 12

b) Name of Department (اسم القسم) *

ID 155

c) Gender (الجنس) *

- ☐ Male (ذكر)
- ☐ Female (انثى)

ID 14

d) Nationality (الجنسية) *

Saudi Arabia
Afghanistan
Albania
Algeria
Andorra
Angola
Antigua and Barbuda
Argentina
Armenia
Australia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Bahamas, The
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belarus
Belgium
Belize
Benin
Bhutan
Bolivia
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Botswana
Brazil
Brunei
Bulgaria
Burkina Faso
Burma

Uruguay

Uzbekistan

Vanuatu

Venezuela

Vietnam

Yemen

Zambia

Zimbabwe

ID 18

2. What is your highest educational qualification? (Please tick the appropriate box).

* (ماهي أعلى مؤهلاتك التعليمية؟ من فضلك ضع علامة في الخانة المناسبة)

- ☐ a) Bachelors (بكالوريوس)
- ☐ b) MA / M.Sc. (ماجستير)
- ☐ c) Ph.D (دكتوراة)

ID 19

3. Has your faculty achieved accreditation? * (هل حصلت كليتك على الاعتماد الأكاديمي؟)

- ☐ a) Yes (نعم)
- ☐ b) No (لا)
- ☐ c) Pending approval (في طور الإعداد للحصول على الاعتماد)
- ☐ d) I do not know (لا أعلم)

(untitled)

ID 157

4. If yes to Q3, please indicate which kind of accreditation your faculty has achieved and when? (you may choose both options if applicable)

إذا أجبت بنعم على السؤال رقم ٣، من فضلك اذكر أي أنواع الاعتماد الذي حصلت عليه (كليتك، ومتى؟)، (من الممكن أن تختار كلاهما إذا كان مطابقاً)*

a) National accreditation (الإعتماد الوطني)*

Not applicable (لا ينطبق)

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

b) International accreditation (الإعتماد الدولي)*

Not applicable (لا ينطبق)

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

(untitled)

Page description:

ID 24

Part II: Service Characteristics (الجزء الثاني: خصائص الخدمة)

ID 25

5. Please indicate your formal role at your institution? (من فضلك حدد منصبك الرسمي في جامعتك؟) *

- ☐ a) Head of Department (HoD) (رئيس قسم)
- ☐ b) Deputy Head of Department (HoD) (نائب رئيس القسم)
- ☐ c) Other, please specify (آخر, حدد من فضلك)

ID 26

6. How were you appointed for your current role? (كيف كان تعيينك لمنصبك الحالي؟) *

- ☐ a) Appointed by senior management of your institution (كان التعيين من قبل الإدارة العليا في جامعتك)
- ☐ b) Nominated by colleagues (ترشيح من قبل الزملاء)
- ☐ c) Appointed through election (كان التعيين عن طريق الانتخابات)
- ☐ d) Appointed through open merit process (كان التعيين عبر عملية الاستحقاق الوظيفي)
- ☐ e) Other, please specify (آخر, حدد من فضلك)

ID 27

7. What is the nature of your current job contract? (ماهي طبيعة عقد عملك في وظيفتك الحالية؟) *

- ☐ a) Permanent (دائم)
- ☐ b) Fixed term (مدة محددة)
- ☐ c) Other, please specify (آخر, حدد من فضلك)

ID 28

8. How long have you been at this institution? (ما مدة عملك في هذه الجامعة؟) *

- ☐ a) Less than one year (أقل من سنة)
- ☐ b) 1-3 years (من سنة إلى ٣ سنوات)
- ☐ c) 3-9 years (من ٣ إلى ٩ سنوات)
- ☐ d) More than 9 years (أكثر من ٩ سنوات)

29

9. How long have you been in your current position? (منذ متى وأنت في منصبك الحالي؟) *

- ☐ a) Less than one year (أقل من سنة)
- ☐ b) 1-3 years (من ١ إلى ٣ سنوات)
- ☐ c) 3-9 years (من ٣ إلى ٩ سنوات)
- ☐ d) More than 9 years (أكثر من ٩ سنوات)

30

10. Were you provided with a description of your current job responsibilities?
(هل تم تزويدك بوصف وظيفي لمهام عملك الحالي؟) *

- ☐ Yes (نعم)
- ☐ No (لا)

52

11. If yes, was quality implementation / achievement part of the job description?
(إذا أجبت بنعم، هل كان تطبيق / تحقيق الجودة من ضمن هذا الوصف الوظيفي؟)

- ☐ Yes (نعم)
- ☐ No (لا)

31

12. Please indicate how the following factors motivated you to become Head of Department / Deputy Head, where 5 = extremely motivating and 1 = not motivating at all

Please use the provided space for further comments.

يرجى الإشارة إلى أي مدى أثرت العوامل التالية على تحفيزك لكي تصبح رئيس قسم / نائب لرئيس القسم بحيث 5 = محفز للغاية و 1 = غير محفز على الإطلاق، من فضلك استخدم الفراغ المعطى أدناه لإضافة أي تعليقات *

	1	2	3	4	5
a) Being able to maintain high standards within the department (القدرة على الحفاظ على معايير عالية داخل الإدارة) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) Being a leader (كونك قائد) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) Giving something back to the community / society (تقديم خدمة إلى المجتمع) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d) Job satisfaction / sense of personal achievement (الرضا الوظيفي / الشعور بالإنجاز الشخصي) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) Strong aspirations to reform the department (طموح قوي لإصلاح القسم) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f) Financial return (العائد المادي) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g) Being able to deal with new challenges (القدرة على التعامل مع التحديات الجديدة) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h) Professional autonomy / implementing own vision (الاستقلالية المهنية / تطبيق الرؤية الخاصة) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments

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13. Approximately how many hours a week do you spend on the following?

*** (كم ساعة في الاسبوع تقريبا تقضيها فيما يلي؟)**

	Up to 3 hours (تصل إلى ٣ ساعات)	3-6 hours (٣ - ٦ ساعات)	6-9 hours (٦-٩ ساعات)	More than 9 hours (أكثر من ٩ ساعات)
a) Teaching (التدريس) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) Research (البحث) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) Administration (الإدارة) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(untitled)

Page description:

56

Part III: Preparation, training and professional development

(الجزء الثالث: الإعداد والتدريب والتطوير المهني)

184

14. Did you receive any training for your current role? Please specify when.

*** (هل تلقيت أي تدريب لمنصبك الحالي ؟ من فضلك حدد متى كان هذا التدريب)**

- ☐ a) Yes, BEFORE I commenced my current role (نعم, قبل أن أبدأ عملي الحالي)
- ☐ b) Yes, AFTER I commenced my current role (نعم, بعد أن بدأت عملي الحالي)
- ☐ c) Yes, BEFORE and AFTER I commenced my current role (نعم, قبل وبعد أن بدأت عملي الحالي)
- ☐ d) No, I did not receive any training (لا, لم ألقى أي تدريب)

58

15. How confident do you currently feel in performing your role as Head of Department / Deputy Head?

***** (ما مدى ثقتك في الوقت الحالي بقدرتك على أداء دورك كرئيس قسم / نائب لرئيس القسم؟)

- ☐ a) Extremely confident (واثق للغاية)
- ☐ b) Very confident (واثق جدا)
- ☐ c) Confident (واثق)
- ☐ d) Somewhat confident (واثق إلى حد ما)
- ☐ e) Not confident at all (غير واثق للغاية)

84

16. In your opinion, who should be responsible for your professional development related to quality? Tick as many as apply.

***** برأيك، من هي الجهة التي يجب أن تكون مسؤولة عن تنمية قدراتك المهنية المتعلقة بالجودة؟ (ضع أكثر من علامة إذا لزم الأمر)

- ☐ a) Ministry of Higher Education- MoHE (وزارة التعليم العالي)
- ☐ b) National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment - NCAAA (الهيئة الوطنية للتقويم والإعتماد الأكاديمي)
- ☐ c) The institution (جامعتي)
- ☐ d) The individual (الفرد)
- ☐ e) All of the above (كل المذكور أعلاه)
- ☐ f) Other, please use the space provided for further comments (من فضلك استخدم الفراغ المعطى لإضافة أي تعليقات)

Comments

(untitled)

Page description:

Part IV: Achieving quality (الجزء الرابع: تحقيق الجودة)

17. In your view, how important are the following elements for achieving quality in higher education? Where 5= extremely important and 1= not important at all.

من وجهة نظرك، مامدى أهمية العناصر التالية في تحقيق الجودة في التعليم العالي؟ بحيث 5=مهم * للغاية و1= ليس مهم على الإطلاق

	1	2	3	4	5
a) Quality of teaching (جودة التدريس) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) Quality of research (جودة البحث) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) Achieving consistency in internal processes e.g. appointment of HoDs should have the same criteria across all the departments/ faculties. (تحقيق الإنتظام في العمليات الداخلية علي، سبيل المثال، توحيد) (المعايير التي يتم بها تكليف رؤساء الأقسام في كل الكليات) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d) Providing education that meets specified objectives and national standards (توفير تعليم يحقق الأهداف والمعايير الوطنية المحددة) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) The ability of the institution to be effective (قدرة الجامعة على أن تكون فعالة) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f) Providing education and services that meet the needs and expectations of students (توفير تعليم وخدمات تلبي حاجات وتوقعات الطلاب) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g) The transformative capacity of the institution (قدرة الجامعة على التغيير أو مجاراة التغيير) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h) The capacity of the institution to improve continuously through the empowerment and enhancement of all involved (قدرة الجامعة على التطور بشكل مستمر من خلال تمكين وتعزيز جميع منسوبيها) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i) Preparing graduates who will meet the society expectations (إعداد الخريجين الذين سيحققون توقعات المجتمع) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j) Preparing graduates who will meet the requirements of employers (إعداد الخريجين الذين سوف يلبيون احتياجات سوق العمل) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k) Reputation of the institution within the national community (سمعة الجامعة داخل المجتمع الوطني) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l) Reputation of the institution at international level (سمعة الجامعة على المستوى الدولي) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. Please indicate how the following factors might hinder you from achieving quality, where 5= extremely hindering and 1= not hindering at all. Please use the space provided for further comments.
يرجى الإشارة إلى أي مدى تعيقك العوامل التالية عن تحقيق الجودة، بحيث 0= معيق للغاية و 1= غير معيق على الإطلاق،،، من فضلك إستخدم الفراغ المعطى أدناه لإضافة أي تعليقات *

	1	2	3	4	5
a) Lack of training on quality (قلة التدريب على الجودة) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) Lack of financial autonomy (عدم توفر القدر الكافي من الصلاحيات المالية) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) Lack of administrative autonomy (عدم توفر القدر الكافي من الصلاحيات الإدارية) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d) Lack of financial resources (قلة الموارد المالية) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) Lack of support from colleagues (قلة الدعم من قبل الزملاء) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f) Lack of support from the institution (قلة الدعم من قبل الجامعة) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g) Lack of support from NCAAA (قلة الدعم من قبل الهيئة الوطنية للتقويم والإعتماد الأكاديمي) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h) Heavy workload (أعباء العمل الكبيرة) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments

19. Please indicate how the following factors are useful to you in achieving quality, where 5= extremely useful and 1= not useful at all. Please use the space provided for further comments.
يرجى الإشارة إلى مدى فائدة العوامل التالية في تحقيق الجودة، بحيث 0= مفيد للغاية و 1= غير مفيد
* (على الإطلاق)،،،، من فضلك إستخدم الفراغ المعطى أدناه لإضافة أي تعليقات

	1	2	3	4	5
a) Good training on quality (التدريب الجيد في الجودة) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) Autonomy in financial decision making (الإستقلالية في إتخاذ القرارات المالية) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) Autonomy in administrative decision making (الإستقلالية في إتخاذ القرارات الإدارية) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d) Adequate financial resources (الموارد المالية الكافية) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) Support from colleagues (الدعم من قبل الزملاء) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f) Support from the Institution (الدعم من قبل الجامعة) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g) Support from NCAAA (الدعم من قبل الهيئة الوطنية للتقويم والإعتماد الأكاديمي) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h) Realistic workload (أعباء عمل واقعية) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments

ID 179

20. To what extent do you think the University Vice Rectorate for Development and Quality contributes to developing a culture of quality among staff and students? (إلى أي مدى في اعتقادك تسهم وكالة الجامعة للتطوير والجودة في نشر ثقافة الجودة بين منسوبيها) *

- ☐ a) To a very high degree (مساهمة إلى درجة عالية جدا)
- ☐ b) To a larger degree (مساهمة إلى درجة عالية)
- ☐ c) To a moderate degree (مساهمة بدرجة متوسطة)
- ☐ d) To a lesser degree (مساهمة بدرجة أقل)
- ☐ e) Not at all (غير مساهمة على الإطلاق)

ID 119

21. To what extent do you think the Quality Unit in your faculty contributes to achieving quality? (إلى أي مدى في اعتقادك تسهم وحدة الجودة الموجودة في كليتك في تحقيق الجودة؟) *

- ☐ a) To a very high degree (مساهمة إلى درجة عالية جدا)
- ☐ b) To a larger degree (مساهمة إلى درجة عالية)
- ☐ c) To a moderate degree (مساهمة بدرجة متوسطة)
- ☐ d) To a lesser degree (مساهمة بدرجة أقل)
- ☐ e) Not at all (غير مساهمة على الإطلاق)

ID 120

22. To what extent do you think the Quality Committee in your department contributes to achieving quality? * (إلى أي مدى في اعتقادك تسهم لجنة الجودة الموجودة في قسمك في تحقيق الجودة؟)

- ☐ a) To a very high degree (مساهمة إلى درجة عالية جدا)
- ☐ b) To a larger degree (مساهمة إلى درجة عالية)
- ☐ c) To a moderate degree (مساهمة بدرجة متوسطة)
- ☐ d) To a lesser degree (مساهمة بدرجة أقل)
- ☐ e) Not at all (غير مساهمة على الإطلاق)

ID 121

23. In your opinion, what is the most important factor in achieving quality in your department? * (من وجهة نظرك، ما هو أهم عامل يسهم في تحقيق الجودة بقسمك؟)

(untitled)

Page description:

ID 125

Part V: National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment
(الجزء الخامس: الهيئة الوطنية للتقويم والإعتماد الأكاديمي)

ID 126

24. To what extent do you think that the standards of NCAAA contribute to achieving quality?
إلى أي مدى في اعتقادك تسهم معايير الهيئة الوطنية للتقويم والإعتماد الأكاديمي في تحقيق
الجودة؟ *

- ☐ a) To a very high degree (مساهمة إلى درجة عالية جدا)
- ☐ b) To a larger degree (مساهمة إلى درجة عالية)
- ☐ c) To a moderate degree (مساهمة بدرجة متوسطة)
- ☐ d) To a lesser degree (مساهمة بدرجة أقل)
- ☐ e) Not at all (غير مساهمة على الإطلاق)

ID 128

25. To what extent are you satisfied with the support received from NCAAA?
إلى أي مدى تشعر بالرضا عن الدعم الذي تتلقاه من الهيئة الوطنية للتقويم والإعتماد الأكاديمي؟ *

- ☐ a) Extremely satisfied (راضي للغاية)
- ☐ b) Very satisfied (راضي جدا)
- ☐ c) Satisfied (راضي)
- ☐ d) Somewhat satisfied (راضي إلى حد ما)
- ☐ e) Not satisfied at all (غير راضي على الإطلاق)

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Please use the space below if you wish to make any further comments about your experience related to achieving quality.

(من فضلك استخدم الفراغ أدناه، إذا رغبت في إضافة أي ملاحظات عن تجربتك في تحقيق الجودة)

ID 130

As part of this research programme, I am also conducting interviews to examine in more depth the role of Heads of Departments and other parties involved in achieving quality. If you are willing to participate, please leave your contact details below:

كجزء من هذا المشروع البحثي، سأجري أيضا مجموعة من المقابلات حتى أدرس بشكل أعمق دور رؤساء الأقسام والأطراف الأخرى المشاركة في تحقيق الجودة إذا لديك استعداد للمشاركة، يرجى تعبئة اسمك وإيميلك الإلكتروني ورقم هاتفك للتواصل أدناه

This information will remain confidential to the researcher.

(هذه المعلومات ستبقى سرية للباحثة فقط)

	Your contact details (معلوماتك الشخصية)
Name (الاسم):	Your contact details (معلوماتك الشخصية) <input type="text"/>
Email address (عنوان البريد الإلكتروني):	Your contact details (معلوماتك الشخصية) <input type="text"/>
Mobile No (رقم الجوال):	Your contact details (معلوماتك الشخصية) <input type="text"/>
Telephone No (رقم الهاتف):	Your contact details (معلوماتك الشخصية) <input type="text"/>
Fax No (رقم الفاكس):	Your contact details (معلوماتك الشخصية) <input type="text"/>

Thank You!

1

شكرا لكم لمساهمتكم في هذه الإستبانة

Appendix D: HoDs Interview Schedule

PID_____ Gender_____

Faculty_____ Department_____

1) What do you understand by the concept of 'quality'? ماذا يعنى لك مفهوم "الجودة"؟

I. Role of HoDs in achieving quality

2) Can you please describe your role as a Head of Department? هل بإمكانك تصف الدور الذي تقوم به كرئيس قسم؟

3) How do you see your role with regard to quality achievement? كيف ترى دورك فيما يتعلق بتحقيق الجودة؟

Probes

- a. Your role with regard to quality in teaching فيما يتعلق بجودة التدريس
- b. Quality in research جودة البحث العلمي
- c. Your role with regard to quality in administration دورك فيما يتعلق بالجودة في الإدارة

4) What, in your opinion, are the expectations of the Dean from you with regard to quality achievement in your department? ماهي برأيك توقعات عميد الكلية منك فيما يتعلق بتحقيق الجودة في القسم؟

5) To what extent do you feel you are able to fulfil these expectations? الى أي حد تشعر بأن لديك القدرة على القيام بهذه الادوار؟

II. Achievement of quality

6) What are your priorities in achieving quality in your department? Please elaborate further? ماهي اولوياتك في سبيل تحقيق الجودة في قسمك؟ من فضلك فصل أكثر؟

7) Are there any factors that prevent you from achieving quality in your department? هل هناك أي عوامل تعتبرها معوقات في طريق تحقيق الجودة في قسمك؟

Probes

- a. What makes you say that? ما الذي يدفعك الى هذا القول؟

- b. *Can you give me an example, please?* هل بالإمكان أن تعطى مثال؟
 c. *Are these challenges intractable / impossible to overcome?* هل هذه المشاكل مستعصية أو لا يمكن التغلب عليها؟

- 8) What are the most important factors that help you in achieving quality in your department? ما هي اهم العوامل التي تساعدك على تحقيق الجودة في قسمك؟

Probes

- a. *What makes you say that?* ما الذي يدفعك الى هذا القول؟
 b. *Can you give me an example, please?* هل بالإمكان أن تعطى مثال؟

- 9) What can you tell me about the Quality Committee in your department? أخبرني عن لجنة الجودة في قسمك؟

Probes

- a. *What do you think of that?* ما رأيك في هذا؟
 b. *Can you elaborate on that?* هل لك أن تفصل أكثر في هذا؟
 c. *Can you give me an example, please?* هل بالإمكان أن تعطى مثال؟

III. Appointment of HoDs

- 10) In your College, how are HoDs appointed? كيف يتم تعيين رئيس القسم في كليتك؟
 11) How does the process, you have just described, influence your ability to achieve quality in your department? كيف تؤثر الآلية التي وصفت الآن على قدرتك على تحقيق الجودة في قسمك؟

Probes

- a. *What changes, if any, do you think are needed in relation to the selection of HoDs in your college?* ما هي التغييرات التي ترى انها مطلوبة فيما يتعلق باختيار رؤساء الاقسام بكليتك؟

- 12) What is your current involvement in the recruitment of faculty members in your department? ما هو دورك الحالي فيما يتعلق بتعيين أعضاء هيئة التدريس في قسمك؟

Probes

- a. *How does this influence quality achievement?* كيف تؤثر هذه على تحقيق الجودة؟

IV. Professional development of HoDs

- 13) In your response to the questionnaire, you identified that you received training for your role as an HoD (before commencing the role, after commencing the role, or both before and after, and received no training at all). في إجابتك على الاستبيان،

بيّنت أنك تلقيت تدريباً للقيام بدورك كرئيس قسم (قبل أو بعد شغل المنصب أو في كلا الحالتين أو لم تتلق أي تدريب البتة).

Probes

- a. هل تتذكر نوع التدريب الذي تلقيته؟ *Can you recall what kind of training you received?*
- b. هل هذا التدريب ساعدك في عملك كرئيس قسم... من فضلك وضح؟ *Did this training help you in your role as an HoD, please explain?*
- c. في حال أنك لم تتلق أي تدريب... ما هو السبب في ذلك؟ *In case you did not receive any training at all, what is the reason for this?*
- d. في حال أنك لم تتلق أي تدريب... كيف أثر ذلك على عملك؟ *In case you did not receive any training at all, and how did it affect your role?*

14) What kinds of training do you think can help you in achieving quality in your department and how?

ما هي انواع التدريب التي ترى انها تساعد على تحقيق الجودة في قسمك؟ وكيف؟

Probes

- a. *Leadership, financial management, human resource management, management of quality assurance, quality of teaching, quality of research* فن القيادة؛ الإدارة المالية؛ إدارة الموارد البشرية؛ إدارة ضمان الجودة؛ جودة التدريس؛ جودة البحث

V. Role of NCAAA in achieving quality

15) Please tell me something about NCAAA? أخبرني عن الـ NCAAA?

Probes

- a. *What do you think of their quality standards?* ما رأيك في معاييرهم الخاصة بالجودة؟
- b. *What about the training they provide?* ماذا عن التدريب الذي يوفره؟
- c. *Can you tell me how you implement the training in your own particular department?* أخبرني كيف يتم تطبيق التدريب في قسمكم؟
- d. *Can you give a specific example please?* هل بالإمكان أن تعطى مثال محدد؟

هل لديك ما تود إضافته؟ Is there anything else you would like to say on the subject of quality?
حول هذا الموضوع؟

~ Thank you for your participation ~

Appendix E: Deans Interview Schedule

PID_____ Gender_____

Faculty_____

- 1) What are your expectations from HoDs in relation to quality achievement? ماهي توقعاتك من رئيس القسم فيما يتعلق بتحقيق الجودة؟
- 2) To what extent do you think these expectations are fulfilled? الى أي مدى باعتقادك تم تحقق هذه التوقعات؟
- 3) What are the challenges/hindrances? ماهي التحديات/العوائق؟
- 4) What are the most helpful factors in fulfilling your expectations from HoDs? ماهي أهم العوامل المساعدة لتحقيق توقعاتك من رئيس القسم؟
- 5) What, in your opinion, are the most important factors that help the HoDs to achieve quality in their departments? ماهي برأيك أهم العوامل التي ستساعد رئيس القسم في تحقيق الجودة المرجوة؟
- 6) How do you think HoDs can be supported to perform their role in relation to quality achievement?
- 7) What can you say about the HoDs current financial autonomy in order to achieve quality? كيف ترى الصلاحيات المالية الحالية الممنوحة لرؤساء الاقسام من اجل تحقيق الجودة؟
- 8) Do you think that giving them more financial autonomy will help them achieve the desired quality? هل تعتقد أن إعطائهم مزيد من الصلاحيات المالية سيساعدهم على تحقيق الجودة المرجوة؟
- 9) What can you say about the HoDs current administrative autonomy in order to achieve quality? كيف ترى الصلاحيات الإدارية الحالية الممنوحة لرؤساء الاقسام من اجل تحقيق الجودة؟

- 10) Do you think that giving them more administrative autonomy will help them achieve the desired quality? هل تعتقد أن إعطائهم مزيد من الصلاحيات الإدارية سيساعدهم على تحقيق الجودة المرجوة؟
- 11) What can you say about the current selection process of HoDs? كيف ترى عملية التعيين الحالية لرؤساء الأقسام؟
- 12) Do you think this process is helpful in selecting the most suitable candidate as an HoD? هل تعتقد أن هذه العملية مفيدة في اختيار أنسب المرشحين لمنصب رئيس قسم؟
- 13) What changes, if any, do you think are needed to improve the current selection process of HoDs in your college? ماهي التغييرات التي ترى انها مطلوبة لتطوير عملية اختيار رؤساء الأقسام الحالية بالكلية؟
- 14) What can you say about the HoDs' professional development in relation to quality achievement? ماذا يمكنك ان تقول على التطور المهني لرؤساء الأقسام فيما يتعلق بتحقيق الجودة؟
- 15) Professional development before commencing the role التطور المهني قبل مباشرة المنصب؟
- 16) Professional development after commencing the role التطور المهني بعد مباشرة المنصب؟
- 17) How do you see the role of NCAAA in achieving quality in your college? كيف ترى دور ال-NCAAA في تحقيق الجودة في كليتك؟

Is there anything else you would like to say on the subject of quality or give any further suggestions about this topic? (هل لديك ما تود إضافته حول موضوع الجودة؟)

Appendix F: Quality Deanship Interview Schedule

PID _____ Gender _____

Faculty _____

- 1) In your view, what role is the Quality Deanship expected to perform in relation to quality achievement? من وجهة نظرك، ما هو الدور المتوقع من عمادة الجودة إنجازه فيما يتعلق بتحقيق الجودة؟
- 2) What are your expectations from HoDs in relation to quality achievement? ماهي توقعاتك من رئيس القسم فيما يتعلق بتحقيق الجودة؟
- 3) To what extent do you think these expectations are fulfilled? الى أي مدى باعتقادك تم تحقق هذه التوقعات؟
 - a. What are the challenges / hindrances? ماهي التحديات/ العوائق؟
 - b. What are the most helpful factors in fulfilling your expectations from HoDs? ماهي أهم العوامل المساعدة لتحقيق توقعاتك من رئيس القسم؟
- 4) What, in your opinion, are the most important factors that help the HoDs to achieve quality in their departments? ماهي برأيك أهم العوامل التي ستساعد رئيس القسم في تحقيق الجودة المرجوة؟
- 5) How do you think HoDs can be supported to perform their role in relation to quality achievement? كيف برأيك يتم دعم رؤساء الاقسام لأداء دورهم فيما يتعلق بتحقيق الجودة؟
- 6) What can you say about the HoDs current financial autonomy in order to achieve quality? كيف ترى الصلاحيات المالية الحالية الممنوحة لرؤساء الاقسام من اجل تحقيق الجودة؟
 - a. Do you think that giving them more financial autonomy will help them achieve the desired quality? هل تعتقد أن إعطائهم مزيد من الصلاحيات المالية سيساعدهم على تحقيق الجودة المرجوة؟
- 7) What can you say about the HoDs current administrative autonomy in order to achieve quality? كيف ترى الصلاحيات الإدارية الحالية لرؤساء الاقسام من اجل تحقيق الجودة؟
 - a. Do you think that giving them more administrative autonomy will help them achieve the desired quality? هل تعتقد أن إعطائهم مزيد من الصلاحيات الإدارية سيساعدهم على تحقيق الجودة المرجوة؟
- 8) What can you say about the current selection process of HoDs? كيف ترى عملية التعيين الحالية لرؤساء الاقسام؟
 - a. Do you think this process is helpful in selecting the most suitable candidate as an HoD? هل تعتقد أن هذه العملية مفيدة في اختيار انسب المرشحين لمنصب رئيس قسم؟

- b. *What changes, if any, do you think are needed to improve the current selection process of HoDs in your university?* ماهي التغييرات التي ترى انها مطلوبة لتطوير عملية اختيار رؤساء الاقسام الحالية بالجامعة؟
- 9) What can you say about the HoDs' professional development in relation to quality achievement? ماذا يمكنك ان تقول على التطور المهني لرؤساء الاقسام فيما يتعلق بتحقيق الجودة؟
- a. *Professional development before commencing the role* التطور المهني قبل مباشرة المنصب؟
- b. *Professional development after commencing the role* التطور المهني بعد مباشرة المنصب؟
- 10) How do you see the role of NCAAA in achieving quality in your university? كيف ترى دور ال-NCAAA في تحقيق الجودة في جامعتك؟
- a. *What do you think of their quality standards?* ما رأيك في معاييرهم الخاصة بالجودة؟
- b. *What do you think about the training they provide?* ماذا عن التدريب الذي يوفره؟
- 11) What, in your opinion, is the role of Quality Deanship in relation to the accreditation process? ماهي برأيك دور عمادة الجودة فيما يتعلق بعملية الاعتماد؟
- 12) How do you maintain quality after obtaining accreditation by NCAAA or any other international agencies? كيف تحافظ على الجودة بعد الحصول على الاعتماد الأكاديمي؟
- الوطني والدولي

Is there anything else you would like to say on the subject of quality or give any further suggestions about this topic? (هل لديك ما تود إضافته حول موضوع الجودة؟)

Appendix G: The Interview Schedule for Heads of College

Quality Units

PID_____ Gender_____

Faculty_____

- 1) In your view, what role is the Quality Unit expected to perform in relation to quality achievement? من وجهة نظرك، ما هو الدور المتوقع من وحدة الجودة إنجازه فيما يتعلق بتحقيق الجودة؟
- 2) What are your priorities in achieving quality in your college? ماهي اولوياتك في سبيل تحقيق الجودة في كليتك؟
- 3) What are your expectations from HoDs in relation to quality achievement? ماهي توقعاتك من رئيس القسم فيما يتعلق بتحقيق الجودة؟
- 4) To what extent do you think these expectations are fulfilled? الى أي مدى باعتقادك تم تحقق هذه التوقعات؟
 - a. What are the challenges / hindrances? ماهي التحديات/ العوائق؟
 - b. What are the most helpful factors in fulfilling your expectations from HoDs? ماهي أهم العوامل المساعدة لتحقيق توقعاتك من رئيس القسم؟
- 5) What, in your opinion, are the most important factors that help the HoDs to achieve quality in their departments? ماهي برأيك أهم العوامل التي ستساعد رئيس القسم في تحقيق الجودة المرجوة؟
- 6) What can you say about the HoDs current financial autonomy in order to achieve quality? كيف ترى الصلاحيات المالية الحالية الممنوحة لرؤساء الاقسام من اجل تحقيق الجودة؟
 - a. Do you think that giving them more financial autonomy will help them achieve the desired quality? هل تعتقد أن إعطائهم مزيد من الصلاحيات المالية سيساعدهم على تحقيق الجودة المرجوة؟
- 7) What can you say about the HoDs current administrative autonomy in order to achieve quality? كيف ترى الصلاحيات الإدارية الحالية لرؤساء الاقسام من اجل تحقيق الجودة؟
 - a. Do you think that giving them more administrative autonomy will help them achieve the desired quality? هل تعتقد أن إعطائهم مزيد من الصلاحيات الإدارية سيساعدهم على تحقيق الجودة المرجوة؟
- 8) What can you say about the HoDs' professional development in relation to quality achievement? ماذا يمكنك ان تقول على التطور المهني لرؤساء الاقسام فيما يتعلق بتحقيق الجودة؟

- a. *Professional development before commencing the role* التطور المهني قبل مباشرة المنصب؟
b. *Professional development after commencing the role* التطور المهني بعد مباشرة المنصب؟
- 9) How do you see the role of NCAAA in achieving quality in your university? كيف ترى دور ال-NCAAA في تحقيق الجودة في كليتك؟
a. *What do you think of their quality standards?* ما رأيك في معاييرهم الخاصة بالجودة؟
b. *What do you think about the training they provide?* ماذا عن التدريب الذي يوفرونه؟
- 10) What, in your opinion, is the role of Quality Unit in relation to the accreditation process? ماهي برأيك دور وحدة الجودة فيما يتعلق بعملية الاعتماد؟
- 11) How do you maintain quality after obtaining accreditation by NCAAA or any other international agencies? كيف تحافظ على الجودة بعد الحصول على الاعتماد الأكاديمي الوطني او الدولي
- 12) Is there anything else you would like to say on the subject of quality or give any further suggestions about this topic? (هل لديك ما تود إضافته حول موضوع الجودة؟)

Appendix H: The Interview Schedule for Heads of Departmental Quality Committees

PID _____ Gender _____

Faculty _____ Department _____

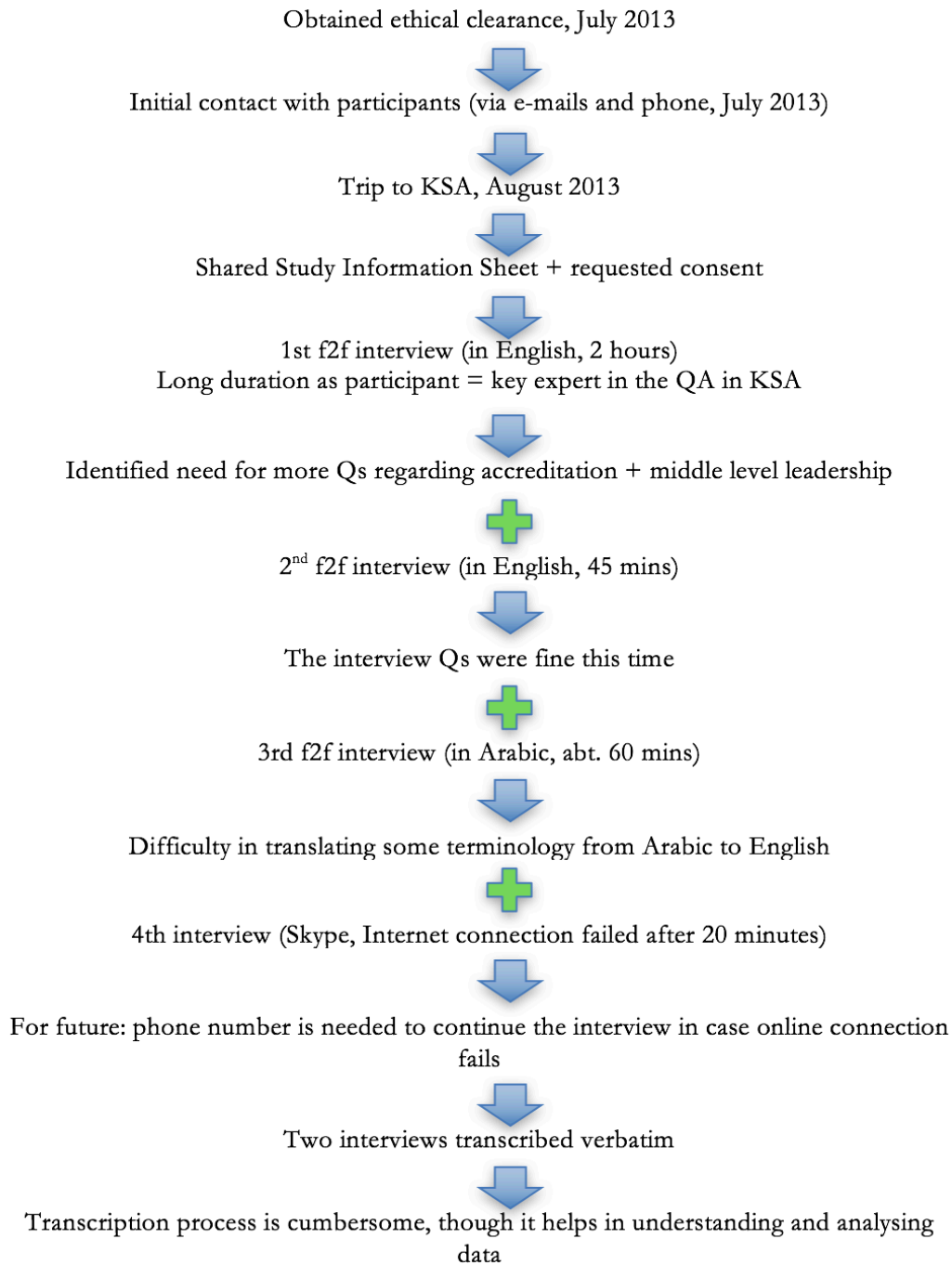
- 1) In your view, what role is the Quality Committee expected to perform in relation to quality achievement? من وجهة نظرك، ما هو الدور المتوقع من لجنة الجودة إنجازه فيما يتعلق بتحقيق الجودة؟
- 2) What are your priorities in achieving quality in your department? ماهي أولوياتك في سبيل تحقيق الجودة في قسمك؟
- 3) What are your expectations from HoDs in relation to quality achievement? ماهي توقعاتك من رئيس القسم فيما يتعلق بتحقيق الجودة؟
- 4) To what extent do you think these expectations are fulfilled? باعتقادك إلى أية مدى تم تحقيق هذه التوقعات؟
- 5) What kind of support do you receive from the HoDs for achieving quality? ما هو نوع الدعم الذي تتلقاه من رئيس القسم؟
- 6) What kind of support do you receive from faculty members for achieving quality? ما هو نوع الدعم الذي تتلقاه من أعضاء هيئة التدريس؟
- 7) Are there any factors that prevent you from achieving quality in your department?
هل هناك أي عوامل تعتبرها معوقات في طريق تحقيق الجودة في قسمك؟
 - a. What makes you say that? ما الذي يدفعك إلى هذا القول؟
 - b. Can you give me an example, please? هل بالإمكان أن تعطى مثال؟
 - c. Are these problems intractable / impossible to overcome? هل هذه المشاكل مستعصية أو مستحيل التغلب عليها؟
- 8) What are the most important factors that help you in achieving quality in your department? ماهي اهم العوامل التي تساعدك على تحقيق الجودة في قسمك؟
 - a. What makes you say that? ما الذي يدفعك إلى هذا القول؟
 - b. Can you give me an example, please? هل بالإمكان أن تعطى مثال؟
- 9) How do you see the role of NCAAA in achieving quality in your department? كيف ترى دور ال-NCAAA في تحقيق الجودة في قسمك؟
 - a. What do you think of their quality standards? ما رأيك في معاييرهم الخاصة بالجودة؟
 - b. What do you think about the training they provide? ماذا عن التدريب الذي يوفره؟
- 10) What, in your opinion, is the role of Quality Committee in relation to the accreditation process? ماهي برأيك دور لجنة الجودة فيما يتعلق بعملية الاعتماد؟
- 11) How do you maintain quality after obtaining accreditation by NCAAA or any other international agencies? كيف تحافظ على الجودة بعد الحصول على الاعتماد الأكاديمي الوطني أو الدولي؟
- 12) Is there anything else you would like to say on the subject of quality or give any further suggestions about this topic? (هل لديك ما تود إضافته حول موضوع الجودة؟)

Appendix I: Previous Rector Interview Schedule

- 1) What was your vision for quality in [Al-Jawda University] in your tenure as a Rector? ماذا كانت رؤيتك للجودة في جامعة [X] بحكم كونك الرئيس السابق للجامعة؟
- 2) What was your strategy to achieve your vision on quality? ماذا كانت استراتيجيتك لتحقيق رؤيتك في الجودة؟
- 3) To what extent you think you were able to achieve your vision on quality? الى اي مدى تعتقد أنك كنت قادر على تحقيق رؤيتك في الجودة؟
- 4) What were the hindrances in relation to quality achievement? ماهي العوائق التي واجهتك لتحقيق الجودة؟
 - a) Any specific hindrances related to HoDs? هل هناك اي عوائق محددة متعلقة برؤساء الاقسام
 - b) How did you overcome those hindrances? كيف تجاوزت هذه العوائق؟
- 5) What were the most important factors that helped you to achieve your vision on quality? ماهي اهم العوامل التي ساعدتك في تحقيق رؤيتك في الجودة؟
- 6) What were your expectations from HoDs in relation to quality achievement? ماذا كانت توقعاتك من رئيس القسم فيما يتعلق بتحقيق الجودة؟
- 7) What can you say about the selection process of HoDs? كيف ترى عملية التعيين (اختيار) لرؤساء الاقسام؟
 - a) Do you think this process is helpful in selecting the most suitable candidate as an HoD? هل تعتقد أن هذه الالية مفيدة في اختيار انسب المرشحين لمنصب رئيس قسم؟
 - b) What changes, if any, do you think are needed to improve the selection process of HoDs in this university? ماهي التغييرات التي ترى انها مطلوبة لتطوير عملية اختيار رؤساء الاقسام بالجامعة؟
- 8) How do you think HoDs can be supported to perform their role in relation to quality achievement? كيف برأيك يمكن دعم رؤساء الاقسام لأداء دورهم فيما يتعلق بتحقيق الجودة؟
- 9) How did you see the role of NCAAA in achieving quality in this university? كيف ترى دور ال-NCAAA في تحقيق الجودة في هذه الجامعة؟
- 10) How did you maintain quality after obtaining accreditation by NCAAA or any other international agencies? كيف حافظت على الجودة بعد الحصول على الاعتماد الأكاديمي الوطني او الدولي
- 11) What can you say about the HoDs financial autonomy in order to achieve quality? كيف ترى الصلاحيات المالية الممنوحة لرؤساء الاقسام من اجل تحقيق الجودة؟
 - a) Do you think that giving them more financial autonomy will help them achieve the desired quality? هل تعتقد أن إعطائهم مزيد من الصلاحيات المالية سيساعدهم على تحقيق الجودة المرجوة؟

- 12) What can you say about the HoDs administrative autonomy in order to achieve quality? كيف ترى الصلاحيات الإدارية لرؤساء الاقسام من اجل تحقيق الجودة؟
a) *Do you think that giving them more administrative autonomy will help them achieve the desired quality?* هل تعتقد أن إعطائهم مزيد من الصلاحيات الإدارية سيساعدهم على تحقيق الجودة المرجوة؟
- 13) What can you say about the HoDs' professional development in relation to quality achievement? ماذا يمكنك ان تقول على التطور المهني لرؤساء الاقسام فيما يتعلق بتحقيق الجودة؟
a) *Professional development before commencing the role* التطور المهني قبل مباشرة المنصب؟
b) *Professional development after commencing the role* التطور المهني بعد مباشرة المنصب؟
- 14) Is there anything else you would like to say on the subject of quality or give any further suggestions about this topic? (هل لديك ما تود إضافته حول موضوع الجودة؟)

Appendix J: The Pilot Study Procedure



Appendix K: Participants' Profiles

No	Position	Gender	Nationality	Language	College
1	HoD	M	Saudi	E & A	College of Dentistry
2	HoD	M	Saudi	Arabic	College of Community
3	HoD	M	Saudi	English	Food and Agriculture Sciences
4	HoD	M	Saudi	Arabic	College of Sport Science and Physical Activity
5	HoD	M	Saudi	English	College of Business
6	HoD	M	Saudi	Arabic	Law and Political Science
7	HoD	M	Saudi	English	College of languages and translation
8	HoD	M	Saudi	English	College of Dentistry
9	HoD	M	Saudi	English	College of Applied Sciences & Community Services
10	HoD	M	Saudi	Arabic	College of Education
11	HoD	M	Saudi	Arabic	College of engineering
12	HoD	M	Saudi	English	Applied medical sciences
13	HoD	M	Saudi	E & A	College of computer and information sciences
14	HoD	F	Saudi	English	College of Arts
15	HoD	F	Saudi	English	Arts and Sciences
16	Dean	M	Saudi	Arabic	College of Engineering
17	Dean	M	Saudi	English	College of Medicine
18	Dean	M	Saudi	English	College of Pharmacy
19	Vice- Dean of Quality and Development	M	Saudi	English	College of Engineering
20	Dean of Quality Deanship	M	Saudi	English	Quality Deanship
21	Head of Assessment and Evaluation Unit <i>Consultant</i>	M	Non-Saudi ¹⁴	English	Quality Deanship

¹⁴ Some non-Saudi participants hold unique positions, hence, indicating their nationalities might compromise the anonymity of these participants. Therefore, I used the term 'non-Saudi' to protect their identities.

22	Head of Academic Accreditation Unit <i>Consultant</i>	M	Non-Saudi	English	Quality Deanship
23	Head of quality & Strategic Planning Unit <i>Consultant</i>	M	Non-Saudi	English	Quality Deanship
24	Head of QMS Unit <i>Consultant</i>	M	Non-Saudi	English	Quality Deanship
25	Head of ISO Unit <i>Consultant</i>	M	Non-Saudi	Arabic	Quality Deanship
26	Vice- Dean Of Quality	F	Saudi	English	Quality Deanship
27	Vice- Dean for Quality	M	Saudi	English	Quality Deanship
28	Head of Quality Unit	F	Saudi	E & A	College of Arts
29	Head of Quality Unit	F	Saudi	English	College of Education
30	Head of Quality Unit	F	Saudi	English	College of Languages & Translation
31	Head of Quality Unit	F	Non-Saudi	English	College of Medicine
32	Head of Quality Unit	F	Non-Saudi	English	College of Nursing
33	Head of Quality Committee	F	Saudi	English	College of Arts
34	Head of Quality Committee	F	Non-Saudi	Arabic	College of Education
35	Vice-Rector for Quality & Development	M	Saudi	English	Vice-Rectorate of Quality & Development
36	Previous Rector	M	Saudi	Arabic	

Appendix L: A Sample of Interview Transcription

PID: HoD12 male	Gender:	Date: 28 th December 2014
Name of the college: the college of Health		Name of the department: [X] Department
No. of years in current University: 3-9 years		No. of years in the current position: 3-9 years

R: What do you understand by the concept of quality?

P: Quality is achieving the minimum required standard of service or product so, achieving the minimum requirements for anything, being it services or a product given to a consumer. It is holistic it is not an aspect considering one part of the work; quality is a value that needs to be considered in all aspects of any job given ...

R: How do you see your role in relation to quality achievement?

P: I consider my self-part of a chain of processes that happen. I am working within an institution, that has set a goal for achieving quality and have set rules and regulations in doing so. My job is to generate the culture of quality in the department which I chair, as you know quality is not only paperwork and forms, it is a culture, it is implicit in the work ethics so, part of my work is to enforce what the institute requires the other part of it is trying to encourage the introduction of quality in the work place as an ethic or culture to the department...

R: Are these challenges that you have just mentioned intractable or impossible to overcome?

P: I don't think so. As I said, in my point of view, it's a matter of time until people begin to understand and begin to incorporate this notion of work. Quality is achieved part of our work ethics from a long time but what is new is institutionalising quality and as I said the factors for achieving quality are there but ... So, I think the hurdles and the obstacles we talked about are not impossible to overcome by any means. We have the human resources to achieve quality we have the infrastructure, what we need to enforce is the motivation and encouragement to do so.

R: In your college, how HoDs are appointed?

P: They are appointed by selection by the Dean directly. We are approached and asked to fulfil this job. After which the selection is sent to the Vice-Rector and finally, the approval comes from the Rector. So, there is no, let's say, voting. And it is selected directly by the Dean, usually based upon recommendation. This recommendation comes from the previous HoD or from somebody from within the department

R: In your response to the questionnaire, you mentioned that you haven't received any training before or after commencing the role as an HoDs?

P: No.

R: Can you please tell me what is the reason (s)?

P: ... there could have been one or two courses that are given by the university for academic administrators like deans and HoDs. However, these courses are elective and hardly, anybody has the time to attend them ...I don't think it is enough for a HoD to take a course and be eligible to be HoD. I think it is important in the selection criteria because there's no amount of courses or training that can take somebody who is potentially a bad HoD and become a good HoD...You have to select somebody who is an academic, somebody who has good judgement. And once you have achieved that, then it is a matter of giving him what is the responsibilities because it is a very unique job. You're not heading somebody who is under you or your subordinate. You are a HoD of your equals. Therefore, it is a very tricky job. It is a very delicate job. And if somebody does not have the qualities to begin with, I don't think a course or training will be enough. Therefore, if we are careful in selecting the right person, then what we need, because we are very much an electronic university now in terms of the administrative side, some of the problems and hurdles happen in introducing the HoD with the ins and outs of the regulations and the different processes that are required from a technical point of view. So, if it's not there in the beginning, it's not going to be enough.

R: Does that affect your role as an HoD?

P: I don't think so. As I said, training to be a HoD ... So, if somebody does not have the qualities should not be...I'm not saying that I have them but I don't see that I have faced any problems for not having had any training.

R: What can you tell me about NCAAA?

P: ... they have set their standards and they have given different areas of academic disciplines, different set of standards to achieve their accreditation. They are one of the most rigid accrediting bodies in the world compared to some of the international academic bodies. I think, what they did is try to bring the most stringent and the most restrictive and the highest or the most rigid criteria in achieving quality and they have applied it to their standards in the beginning ... The NCAAA focuses on achieving the NCAAA accreditation, focuses very heavily on the Self-Study Report ...We found that the requirements set by international accrediting bodies are much easier than NCAAA criteria partly because it is a global accrediting body. It is for every discipline whereas we go and get accreditation internationally from selective specialised accrediting bodies, for example, ... So, usually, their criteria are less stringent and rigid whereas NCAAA has to deal with all disciplines. Therefore, we find it to be a lot more restrictive, a lot more rigid requirements...

R: Is there anything else you would like to say in the subject of quality or give any suggestion on this subject?

P: ... quality needs to be an appetising notion, meaning that it is now considered the burden. When we talk about quality, you talk about people who respond very negatively because they think that it is just some extra work that they need to be doing. I think there needs to be more emphasis on the benefits of quality and achieving quality. It needs to be conducted in a more relaxed form. People need to understand why they are doing this. How will this affect their outcome? How will this affect their profession positively? ...

Appendix M: A Sample of Interview Coding

+ ▾ Quotation from Selection Add Coding Code In Vivo Quick Coding

Hide
Documents 16 : HoD 15 ▾
Quotations 10 : Quotation ▾
Codes Understanding quality concept ▾
Memos No Selection ▾
Hide ▾

HoD 14	HoD 15	HoD 3	HoD 7	
<div style="margin-bottom: 5px;"><input type="text" value="Search Documents"/></div> <div>Filter: Off Sort by Number ▾</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 HoD 1 30 3 HoD 3 63 4 HoD 4 41 5 HoD 5 84 6 HoD 6 53 7 HoD 7 43 8 HoD 8 55 9 HoD 9 32 10 HoD 10 40 11 HoD 11 52 12 HoD 12 51 13 HoD 13 60 14 HoD 2 59 15 HoD 14 48 16 HoD 15 30 <p>15 Document(s)</p>	<p>P: Because we are trying to focus on that the faculty should use technology since, like now we have the podium now we have smart classrooms and we require that the faculties to use these podiums but if they don't know how to use them, they don't know how to go into the internet then off corset hers so much information on the internet that we don't only use our text books but e require also that students do research, to do papers. So, they have to be able to know how to go and surf the net and if the instructor doesn't even know how to do that then off course it's going to create some problems and a gap? Other than that no, I think everything else is go very smoothly.</p> <p>I: Are this problem intractable / impossible to overcome?</p> <p>We are overcoming this problem by offering training programs for the faculty members, for them to be able to use the LMS, the podium and Edugate. So all of these programs we have, also we have training programs for and we have the IT support, so even after these training programs are over and they still have questions or they have a problem the IT support would be open, it's 24/7 they could either call them or they could even go to them and they could show them one to one.</p> <p>I: What are the most important factors that help you in achieving quality in your department?</p> <p>P: I think its what the university provide, like what I said a minute ago the, IT support 24/7 we all have their phone numbers in case we need them, for the working hours if we need any kind of training, any kind of help if the podium for some reason doesn't work or the internet doesn't work all we have to do is call them and they come immediately and they solve the problem. They are very supportive and helpful; all of them are highly trained and qualified. So they take care of the problem immediately.</p> <p>I: What can you tell me about the quality committee in your department?</p> <p>P: We have a wonderful committee; they're always on top of the tasks that are required, they're always in contact with the faculty members, they make sure that even when they send emails out for a certain task to be done. We have secretaries that follow up on them for those who don't replay right away, you know sometime they get involved in their teaching and they forget about replying (she laughed) right away. So we have two secretaries as a matter of fact that are just for the quality. So they go around even to the faculty members offices to remained them to do a certain task or what ever is required.</p> <p>I: How many members are there in this committee?</p> <p>P: Well we have the head of the committee and then we have two secretaries and then we have also another admin, who reviews the files. So the total is four.</p> <p>I: What are they doing exactly?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Show All Quotations</p>			
	<div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold;">Quotation</div> <p>FMs-related hindra</p>		<div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold;">Quotation</div> <p>Addressing FMs-re</p>	<div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Code</div> <div style="background-color: #fff; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Understanding quality concept</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">Color <input type="radio"/> No Color</div> <div style="background-color: #fff; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Comment</div> <div style="background-color: #fff; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> Fonts <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> U <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div> <div style="background-color: #fff; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Quality understood as achieving goals!</div> <div style="background-color: #fff; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Links</div> <div style="font-size: small;"> 7:11 Quotation 14:17 Quotation 4:37 Quotation 9:7 Quotation 3:27 Quotation 11:5 Quotation 12:8 Quotation 16:10 Quotation 13:65 Quotation 16:8 Quotation 8:13 Quotation 6:32 Quotation 10:1 Quotation 11:1 Quotation 13:62 Quotation 10:13 Quotation 15:20 Quotation 12:1 Quotation 5:22 Quotation 13:1 Quotation 4:25 Quotation 3:26 Quotation 1:6 Quotation </div> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px;">Status</div> <div style="font-size: x-small;"> Created: 26 September 2015 Hissah Altuwayjiri Channed: 5 October 2015 </div>
	<div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold;">Quotation</div> <p>IT support as facilit</p>		<div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold;">Quota...</div> <p>Perception of QC p</p> <div style="background-color: #ffe0e0; padding: 2px; margin-top: 5px;">Role in ensuring</div>	
	<div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold;">Quota...</div> <p>Selection of QCMs</p>			

Appendix N: ATLAS.ti Codes Report

- 'Quality Manual' as facilitator to HoD work
- Academic responsibilities
- Accountability
- Accreditation as part of quality
- Achieving quality by covering syllabus
- Addressing FMs-related hindrances
- Addressing research-related hindrances
- Addressing student-related hindrances
- Addressing system-related hindrances
- Administrative roles
- Administrative support
- Advantages of accreditation/quality
- Advantages of the new selection system
- Belief in/ dedication to quality
- Benefits of training
- Bureaucracy as a hindrance
- Challenges in performing QC role
- Commitment to QA
- Communication
- Community engagement
- Competition and recognition to achieve quality
- Confidence in performing HoD role in relation to quality achievement
- confident
- Consulting peer as facilitator to QA
- Continuity of quality achievement
- Cooperation as facilitator to QA
- Culture of quality
- Deans as facilitator
- Deans expectations
- Delegation
- Developing departmental strategy
- Educational system-related hindrances
- Enhancing research
- Ensuring quality of teaching
- Equalising priorities of quality
- Evaluation of FMs
- Existing criteria for HoDs selection
- Expectations from the researcher
- Facilitators
- Factors affecting training attendance
- Factors influencing performance of HoDs
- Factors influencing FMs recruitment
- factors influencing QA
- Financial hindrance
- Financial support
- FMs involvement in QA
- FMs training
- FMs-related hindrances
- FMs-related suggestions for QA
- Hindrances
- Hindrances-related to HoDs selection

- Hiring FMs and TAs
- HoD as a bridge
- HoD as a facilitator
- HoD as a leader
- HoD as coordinator
- HoD in charge of QC
- HoD nomination from different ~~depts~~
- HoD selection process
- HoDs having numerous responsibilities
- HoDs involvement in FMs recruitment
- HoDs involvement in study abroad for TAs
- HoDs selection influences QA
- HoDs-related suggestions for QA
- Incentives for QCMs
- Interest in quality knowledge
- International quality training for HoDs
- International vs. National accreditation
- ISO as facilitator in HoDs role
- IT support as facilitator
- Knowledge of university quality strategy
- Training opportunities
- Lack of clarity of job description
- Lack of consequences
- Lack of continuity on quality
- Lack of cooperation
- Lack of financial incentives for QC
- Lack of guidance on QA
- Lack of trained personnel
- Leadership characteristics
- Limitation to HoDs training
- Male ~~D~~HoDs as helpful factor
- Measuring quality
- Mechanisms for achieving quality
- Motivation to be an HoD
- Nature of professions as facilitator in QA
- NCAAA
- NCAAA implementation process
- NCAAA training-related hindrances
- NCAAA's role in ~~depts~~ accreditation
- Nepotism
- Obtaining accreditation of ~~depts~~
- Perceived challenges of HoD's role
- Perception of FMs recruitment
- Perception of hindrances
- Perception of Al-Jawda University ranking
- Perception of NCAAA standards
- Perception of QC performance
- Positive perception of selection process
- Power as hindrance
- Power of HoDs
- Pre-role training

- Preparing students for labour market as priority
- Previous experience
- Priorities in QA
- Professional development of HoDs
- Qualified and motivated FMs
- Quality as a continuous process
- Quality as a main priority
- Quality as ticking boxes
- Quality Committee
- Quality Unit
- Reducing bureaucracy
- Representing Department at College Council
- Research as facilitator
- Research-related hindrances
- Responsibilities of QC
- Role in ensuring quality
- role of ~~D~~HoDs
- Role of HoDs
- Role of Leadership
- Role of previous Rector
- Role of technology in QA
- Role of training in quality
- Selection of HoDs
- Selection of HoDs by nomination
- Selection of QCMs
- Sharing experience
- Standardisation of learning outcomes
- Student involvement in quality
- Student learning as main priority
- Student Pastoral role
- Student-related hindrances
- Student-related suggestions
- Suggestion-related Selection Committee
- Suggestion-related uniformity of programmes
- Suggestions
- Suggestions for changing selection process
- Teamwork as facilitator to QA
- Training for administrative tasks
- Training-related suggestions
- Understanding NCAAA's role
- Understanding quality concept
- University regulations
- University regulations as facilitator to QA
- Workload-related hindrance

Appendix O: A Sample of HoDs' Interpretations of Quality and Applied Strategies

Field	Interviewee	Quality Perception	Quality Strategies	Quality Concept	Aligned? (Yes/No)
Health	HoD 1 Experience: 8 years	quality is a culture of change and improvement <i>"The concept of quality is the target of excellence and of the elites; that's why I believe everyone should believe in quality as if we had it as a concept then 99% of the life we are living would change, the most important thing is not to think of it as an academic method but rather as a way of life"</i>	-Generating a departmental culture of quality beyond that required by the central administration <i>"If you believe in it then the job will be done but if you don't then no matter what you do you will end up with no quality."</i> -Engage faculty members in achieving quality <i>"there is not one person in this department that has not worked in the Quality Committee so far."</i>	Culture	<u>Yes</u> HoD1 thinks quality is a culture and can be achieved through generating a departmental culture
	HoD 8 Experience: 3 months	<i>"Excellence, transparency – to be honest – independent. The department should be independent, take the decisions independently in the right way and in the right time and integrity."</i>	- Achieving the high standards <i>"I always try to score as high as I can in terms of 90% or 80% to follow all the NCAAA guidelines in teaching"</i> - Instrumental in achieving standards <i>"ensuring the quality in terms of excellence, in terms of transparency with my faculty or with my colleagues, and with our students, and integrity."</i>	Vague	HoD8 repeats the words of excellence, transparency and integrity.

	HoD 12 Experience: 5 years	quality is a culture of change and improvement <i>“achieving the minimum required standard of service or product so, achieving the minimum requirements for anything, being it services or a product given to a consumer. It is holistic it is not an aspect considering one part of the work; quality is a value that needs to be considered in all aspects of any job given.”</i>	-generating a departmental culture of quality beyond that required by the central administration <i>“generating the culture of quality in the department which I chair, as you know quality is not only paper work and forms, it is a culture, it is implicit in the work ethics so, part of my work is to enforce what the institute requires the other part of it is trying encourage the introduction of quality in the work place as an ethic or culture to the department.”</i> -as part of a quality chain <i>“and processes that happen in the department”</i> -engage faculty members in achieving quality <i>“we try to involve as many faculty members in the quality committee as possible. That is part of our policy in trying to disseminate the work on quality amongst the faculty members. And it’s a learning opportunity as well”</i> - you are met with the criteria	Compliance & Culture	<u>Yes</u> HoD12 understands quality as a culture and achieving minimum standards, however, the strategies used is aligned with his perception of quality.
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Appendix P: A Sample of Interview Translation

interested, he/she will have a detrimental effect on the department and vice-versa.

كان في السابق يتم اختيار رؤساء الاقسام في جامعتنا من قبل عميد الكلية عن طريق ترشيح ثلاثة من المشهود لهم بالكفاءة بعد موافقتهم وليس شرطا ان يقدم برنامج تطويري يوضح فيه استراتيجيته لتطوير القسم بما يتناسب مع طموح الكلية والجامعة وتحقيق الجودة وترتيبهم من الاول الى الثالث والرفع بهم الى مدير الجامعة وبعد ذلك تأتي الموافقة من إدارة الجامعة على واحد من الثلاثة حسب ما تقتضيه المصلحة وعادة ما يكون المرشح الاول مالم تكون هناك ملاحظات عليه من الجامعة. (HoD4)

Previously, the Dean used to nominate three candidates known for their competence, regardless of whether or not their strategic plans fall in line with the university's ambitions and its quality aspirations.

The dean would next convey his list to the Vice-Rector who will choose the most suitable person. Generally this would be the first candidate unless the administration committee had any reservations.

في الفترة الحالية شكلت كليتتنا لجنة لاختيار وكلاء الكلية ورؤساء الاقسام وكان هذا في اغلب الكليات حيث انه يتمشى مع توجهات الجامعة وبما يتناسب مع الوصول الى العالمية.

وللمنافسة على رئاسة القسم يتقدم المرشحين بأوراقهم الى اللجنة بالكلية عن طريق ترشيح انفسهم او ترشيح زملائهم لهم وبعد فحص اوراقهم ومقابلتهم ويتم خلالها اختيار المرشحين وترتيبهم والرفع الى عميد الكلية ومن ثم الرفع الى مدير الجامعة وقد مرت بنفس الطريقة وتم اختياري كرئيس قسم للمرة الثالثة من بين اربعة مرشحين. (HoD 4)

Currently, there is a committee in charge of selecting HoDs as this would be line with the university's plan to go global. In order to be eligible for the HoD position, The candidate can either nominate